

The S-Classes That I Raised

Chapter 1: <Regression (1)>

“... Hyung, are you okay?”

That guy said. His side was ripped open and his guts were spilling out, and he was asking if I was ok.

He was on the verge of death yet his face was only a little pale. His calm look annoyed me. I sat on the floor and looked up at my brother without saying anything.

He was always interfering with my work. He was better than the dirty me, so people had always told me to stay put and behave, to not hold onto his thigh. They weren't wrong to say that because eventually I had broken this big and reliable thigh.

However.

“.....Why are you here?”

A blunt voice came out of my mouth on this old subject.

Why did you come to such a shit place for someone you don't even know?

We were anything but close. If we ever ran into each other, there would only be a cold breeze. When my leg bones had been shattered, he did not come to the hospital to see me even once. When I went to him to request for help to fix my broken leg, he coldly turned me down and had me dragged out. That day, after being kicked out I was forced to take the money he gave me. I have never talked to him ever since.

He laughed bitterly at my question.

“Why are you here, fuck.”

Even though I thought he was the type of person who would bite the hand that feeds, a curse still emerged from my mouth. He had a lot of expectations on his shoulders but he still gave his life to save a useless family member. Crazy son of a bitch.

Since when were we that friendly? If you’re dead and on the news, damn it, I’ll just swear a few times and then forget about it.

But what did you do?

I was angry. I was angry and irritated by my patheticness, not him.

Yes, I’ve always been an ugly older brother. Even in this situation, I’m still a person with a garbage brain filled with complaints and an inferiority complex.

So just let me die in a corner of a Dungeon! Why did you come?!

“Listen to me, hyung.”

That guy said, avoiding my question.

“Lauchitas falls asleep within five-hour cycles. If you hide for an hour, it will eventually go to sleep. Then you just have to get out through the entrance. I’ve taken care of all the lesser monsters so as long as you do not touch Lauchitas, you will be safe.”

He then held out a small blue stone to me. It was a gatestone that provided a way out of a closed dungeon. It can only be used near the entrance and is a very valuable item that could only be used one time by one person.

I did not take the gatestone and pretended to be uncaring.

“Good for you. Now use it.”

He laughed at my words.

“I’ve got mine. I won’t use this.”

...Now that you’re one of the best Hunters in Korea, you’re carrying several of those precious gatestones. I reluctantly accepted the gatestone.

It was only then that he took his eyes off me and looked at his wounds. Without the strength of his skills, he would have long collapsed and died.

“.....You have gatestones, do you have anything like elixirs?”

“No, I don’t. I have a small potion, but I don’t think that’s going to work. Lauchitas has a powerful curse on its claws.”

He laughed again. I didn’t know how to laugh with him.

But that kind of calmness soon reached its limit. His knees bent and his body fell forward. I reflexively caught the upper half of his body.

The smell of blood that I hadn’t felt so far stung my nose. It was awful.

I thought I got used to the smell of blood as I walked around the dungeon but it brought me to my knees.
I felt sick.

I was tempted to throw away the body in my arms and flee.

“.....hey.”

I could hardly hear the sound of breathing.

There was no answer.

I couldn't laugh.

“.....are you dead?”

My voice was shaking. It's none of my business whether this asshole dies or not.

“Han Yuhyun. Are you dead?”

Damn, this stupid son of a bitch. I'd be damned if I survived by myself. I'm sure that there were a lot of guys who would want to burn the scumbag who killed his younger brother.

“You're going to screw with me to the end?”

I muttered in vain.

Up to this day, he's been interrupting me in everything I do. It is now time to hide. Dirty to the end, really.

[Effect of 'Caregiver' title has been activated.

Caregiver's Additional Skill — Final Reward

The skills and abilities of Awakened 'Han Yuhyun' have been transferred with twice the efficiency.

Duration — 01:00]

A notice popped up, confirming his death. As one of the Additional Skills of my title, when a target who had been given the growth buff died, the target's skills and abilities can be transferred for one hour

It also doubled in power.

As his power filled my body, some of his memories were also passed on.

'My brother is an F-Level Awakener.'

This son of a bitch even to the end—

'So he cannot be involved with me.'

Yuhyun was talking to someone. He seemed a little sad.

'It's already damaged, but in the future we need to be even more distant. Because Awakeners who

qualified to become Hunters are not protected by the law.'

'If my brother becomes my weakness, they will no doubt go after him.'

...who the hell are they?

'Damn it, dispose of all of those bastards!'

It was when my leg had been broken. He was angry. And then he was sad again.

'No. Tell him... healing is not possible. It would be better for him. I kicked him out... But he's still my brother, I cannot help but help him.....'

'Hyung, I'm sorry.'

'Sorry...'

'Please don't go into the dungeon.'

'Hyung.'

My brother's memory tightened my throat. The entire area was silent, but the sound of "hyung" still hurt my ears. The body was cold and stiff.

I was going crazy.

As expected, this fellow had covered for me until the very end. What are you protecting me for? The older brother is me. I had lost my parents at an early age, dropped out of school, and took care of my younger brother, raising him.

“Damn him! Did he think I was going to regret this?”

It’s your fault that you didn’t say a word.

I carefully laid my younger brother’s body onto the floor. His face looked relaxed. If I leave alone, it would be the same as when I came in.

“I’m not going to cry.”

Until the end, that selfish guy just did whatever he wanted; why would I cry for him? It was a waste of tears.

I got up. When I looked at the status window, I saw the increased number of skills. They were all top quality, even the double buffs.

Laughter broke out.

Just one hour. For just an hour, I had become the strongest person in the world at the cost of my younger brother’s life.

“Damn it, what can you do with only one hour?”

It would be better for Han Yuhyun to be live longer for 40 or 50 more years. Even if Yuhyun became a grandfather, he would still be a lot stronger than me. How could it be compared to this one-time, one-hour presentation?

“Stupid bastard. That stupid fucking bastard.”

My brother’s stupidity brought tears to my eyes. The title of ‘genius’ was a waste on him. He was the world’s biggest fool.

“Gigant Shield.”

As soon as I used the skill, a faint golden light wrapped around my body. Originally, it was a shield that couldn’t stop Lauchitas’ claws, but now that it received the double buffs, I would survive even if I was bitten by the creature itself.

This, is all yours. So I am going to avenge you.

I walked slowly out of a gap in the wall where I was hiding. I could see a giant monster lurking at the far end of the wide corridor.

Lauchitas. Grade 1 polyp. The Dragon King of Poison and Curse. It had only appeared twice so far and both times were deemed as a non-combatant because its Dungeon door was closed.

The red dragon with three heads was looking at me. Among the three heads, the middle one’s eyes had been burnt out. The Lauchitas was very resilient, but it seemed that even it could not recover in such a short period of time from the injuries caused by Yuhyun’s blood.

Yeah, my younger brother’s great. Now I have double the abilities of that great younger brother

Fuck. You’re dead.

End

Chapter 2: <Regression (2)>

I pulled out a dagger and made a long cut on my forearm. Blood leaked out of the cut and formed a dark red spear. Dazzling black flames flowed from the tip of the spear and wound around the shaft.

-Grrrr

Lauchitas, who had previously looked down on my and ignored me, raised all three of its heads at the same time. Its hackles rose, wary at the sight of the spear that had taken its eyes. Its mouth opened, showing the rows of serrated teeth that lay within.

If it were the original me, I would have long collapsed under its pressure before I could even meet its eyes. But now I couldn't even feel the slightest bit of tension.

I was sure. It was weaker than me.

"C'mon, you fucking lizard."

-Grrrr!

It cried as if in answer. The entire area was shaken by the roar that was full of life. The three heads of the red giant completely rose off the ground. There were no wings. Instead it had a sleek body that wore awful curses all over it, like a leopard's spotted coat. Its long tail were full of speckled and patterned swirls, along with a set of thorns.

Thud!

Its four feet hit the ground. The sickle-like claws, which resembled the scythes of the god of death, left

long scars on the floor. It had unimaginably fast movement for such a giant body. In one move, the creature crossed the space between us in a single leap. If it had been the me from before, I wouldn't have been able to catch it.

But now I could.

"Why aren't you crawling?"

I felt like it was a puppy that was running around. My brother was ranked 3 in terms of speed among the world's strongest adults and teenagers. If my younger brother had been alone, the attacks of this little three-headed lizard wouldn't be allowed to even graze him. At this moment, I was faster than him.

Tap!

I jumped into the air with a twisted mockery of a smile.

Smash!

The creature's claws broke through the ground I had been standing on. As I lazily looked down at the scene, I used a flood of skills.

"Blue Willow Leaves."

Leaves that could only be seen by the caster scattered over the area. I stepped on the leaves with my toes and jumped up into the air once again.

The highly poisonous Lauchitas jumped up again and again but I nimbly dodged its claws. Its curses, that shot up at me like stingers, was blocked by the shield.

Graaa!

The baby lizard on the ground roared. If you don't like this, come up here with your wings!

My brother had no flying skills. But with the Blue Willow Leaves skill, he could dance in the air as if we were on the ground. There wasn't any goddamn thing that he couldn't do.

"No, he couldn't cut ties with a useless older brother."

Muttering, I pulled the spear in my head to the side. I wound the black flames back and pulled as if I were pulling a bow.

Shoot!

-Grrrr!

The spear that I fired penetrated the left head of Lauchitas. The black flames soared and the pierced head melted away in an instant. The lizard went mad with pain, running wild, swinging its claws and biting with its teeth. However, it was too slow.

Thud! Thud!

Like an eel that had been dragged ashore onto dry land, it jumped up and down on its bottom. It was a funny scene. That bastard's funny, but I'm funny too.

I used my blood to create a new spear.

Bam!

-Kuh! Graa!

The right head was also smashed. With the loss of the heads that had working eyes, the Lauchitas was discern the world around it. The creature with scales all over its body stopped moving around and crouched down. It was as if it was scared.

“.....this is too easy.”

It was so easy that I was almost in tears. It met its end too quickly.

If I burned the last head, even the most powerful dragon species wouldn't be able to withstand it, but I aimed for the legs instead of the head. It was as helpless as a fish drying up on hot sand as I cut its limbs off one by one.

Slowly, gently.

The monster shrieked, groaned, and then took its final, dying gasps.

The floor was like a bloody version of a muddy swamp, but the Lauchitas was still alive. I clicked my tongue and sat on its body.

Time was almost up. Once the timer for the skill was over, I would immediately die from the venom of Lauchitas' carcass.

What a useless person, I was.

“What else could I do even if I survived?”

If people knew that Yuhyun was dead because of me, his older brother, I would probably be sentenced to a public execution. If I was tied to the square, people would come from all over the world to stone me.

“I would go down in history, maybe even in textbooks. I have been cursed a lot so far, but now I’m sure I’m going to be cursed for generations to come. Haha.”

Why did you die instead of me, my stupid younger brother? It was really useless. Ah, fuck. I should have died back then when I had broken my leg. Then I wouldn’t be as horrible as I am now and Yuhyun wouldn’t have died for me. He really saved such a useless and unnecessary guy.

I thumped on the scales of the Lauchitas, which was breathing its last breaths, with the palm of my hand.

“I’m not going to live much longer so don’t be unfair. Why did you come out of a D Class Dungeon anyway? Did the managers miscalculate the Class?”

Either way, it didn’t matter to me anymore. There was no way I had the energy to leave before the effects of my skill ended.

“Why hadn’t I simply supported Yuhyun from behind and lived well?”

Getting protected by my good-natured younger brother and just live off of him; why did I get this inferiority complex?

Just then, the reward window for the death of Lauchitas popped up.

[Impossible Achievement! You have hunted a dragon alone!]

Yuhyun had shot the dragon too; why was it considered alone? Maybe it was because of the time difference between his attacks and mine.

Legendary Title 'Dragon Slayer' has been granted!]

Dragon Slayer. It sounded like a title with some great stats, but I hadn't checked it. How did I know? A pumpkin is still a pumpkin even if you draw lines on it.

Then, my level rose and a series of items appeared one after another.

[Gatestone x10]

[Grade 1 Grant Amount x5]

[Red Dragon's Great Sword]

[Wish Stone]

Huh? Wish Stone?

While glancing through the items in the window, the first thing I noticed was the Wish Stone. It was my first time seeing such an item.

"Just by seeing your name, it seems like you'll be able to grant me a wish."

No way. Something like that could only be a scam.

Though I thought it was ridiculous, I still sat up. When I opened the inventory, I saw a red bead that was just a little smaller than my fist.

Swallowing dryly, I took the beads out and checked the information on it.

[Wish Stone – Myth Class

Grants one wish for the user.]

It's real!

"Then, my younger brother-!"

[✕ Resurrection of the deceased is not allowed.]

".....what the fuck?!"

I belatedly noticed the last condition of the item. Why wasn't I able to save a dead person? A Myth Class should be a Myth Class! If you are a god, you should be able to do whatever you want!

"Dammit, then what's the point?! Everything except saving people? I, I just...!"

I grasped the Wish Stone tightly in my hand.

Things that I could wish for instantly flashed through my head. If it could grant any wish, I might be able

to become stronger than Yuhyun. Maybe I could keep my current state.

Then I could get rid of my bad reputation. People would soon forget the heroes of the past and praise the new ones.

I could finally take the position that I had been so envious of.

In a much more glorious position, I could climb higher than anyone.

I was caught in delusion and rolled my eyes, and sighed for a long time.

“.....Yuhyun, you. You’re really screwing with me until the end.”

I might regret it. No, I’m sure that I would regret it.

So, I won’t regret anything.

I’m already coated with layers of regret, if I added one more, would it make a difference?

“Hey, Wish Stone. Is it possible to turn back time?”

As if in answer, the red bead began to shine. The dead could not be raised, but I could still do this. It seemed like it was better to turn the clock back, how funny.

Then to before I came in here, no. Just bring me back to five years ago. With my current memory. I’ll live quietly and live well this time around.”

If I hadn't gone out, I wouldn't have been in trouble and my legs would be fine. Yuhyun wouldn't be upset because of me. Everything would be fine.

I would just live off of my brother's surplus money.

[Do you want to turn back time?]

"Yeah."

The light shining from the beads grew stronger. All my eyes saw was bright red burn, and then suddenly everything became white.

And.

The sight of a strange room settled in front of my restored vision.

End

Chapter 3: <My Younger Brother is Strange (1)>

I was sitting on a bed and not on a dragon's body. The scent of blood was also gone. The clothes I had been wearing were different too.

'.....Have I really gone back in time?'

First of all, I could not open the status window. I didn't have my inventory either. Five years ago, I still had yet to be Awakened.

'Yuhyun, that kid, was already a popular guild leader.'

Haeyeon Guild (垓埏). It was the guild that would become the best in both Korea and the world after five years of rapid development with a small number of elite members.

Of course, I was unable to get in. ...There were many guild members that did not like me.

‘I’ve heard a hundred times that I should stop hanging around the guild and get out.’

Ugh, lousy things. Yeah, this time around I’ll keep my head down and live well.

I rummaged through my pocket and took out my cellphone. The date... Oh, I really was 5 years in the past. The most recent message was—

‘Wait, wasn’t this an Awakening Broker?’

Just that morning I had contacted the Awakening Broker. Seeing that, I began to recall the past.

‘I have gone back to that time.’

It had been 3 years since Dungeons started appearing in the world, causing the Awakening of many enthusiastic Hunters. Now was a time where the rapidly changing world was gradually stabilizing.

It was a time when I was struggling with an inferiority complex, only able to look at the back of my brother, who was a well-known “S-level Awakening”. Therefore I contacted the Awakening Broker in the vain hope that if I Awakened, I would be like him.

Awakening Brokers. To put it simply, swindlers.

Awakening Brokers were brokers who illegally allowed people to enter Dungeons in exchange for a large amount of money, telling them that they would Awaken if they clear the Dungeon. Most of them, however, were vicious people who would disappear after taking the money. Even if they did take you to the Dungeon, they would not protect you.

‘It’s not like I Awakened through clearing a Dungeon in the first place.’

There was a high possibility of Awakening due to the dangerous environment of a Dungeon, but it has nothing to do with clearing the Dungeon. Those facts were revealed to the public half a year later and the Korean Hunter’s Association would later create a safe Awakening facility, and brokers completely disappeared.

Anyway, I had packed some money to meet with the broker.

‘I had gotten caught by my younger brother’s men and brought here.’

Yeah, I remember this for sure. This was one of the rooms in the Haeyeon Guild building.

Right now he was probably going to come in and yell at me with disapproval. Just as I had that thought, the door burst open. Han Yuhyun stepped into the room.

He wasn’t a gentleman either.

“Hyung.”

My living younger brother called out to me. The face looking at me was very young. He was young even after five years but right now, he was even younger.

He was twenty years old, now.

He was just now showing signs of being an adult; if the world was peaceful, he would still be a student. Either that or he would have just been enlisted into the army. Of course, the army still existed.

‘S Class Awakeners were exempt from the army, though.’

I had gone there. There were many young man in the army who Awakened in the army and get discharged early. If I had been honorably discharged, it would be due to the fact that I was an F Class. Exemption from military service started with Class Es.

Anyway Yuhyun was so good that he didn’t need to go to the military... Oh, my inferiority complex was about to explode again.

Let’s give up greed. Let’s throw away anguish. Namo Amitahba. (t/n: Buddhist mantra)

With a dirty look on his face, Yuhyun walked towards me. Now that he was closer, I could see that the five-year period was more difficult for him than I had thought.

I hadn’t really thought about it before my regression, but now it seemed that he must have had a hard time. It wasn’t easy to make and develop your own guild even if you were an S Class.

Meanwhile, his older brother got into an accident.

.....I was wrong.

“Dungeon Brokers are—”

"I'm sorry."

I apologized first. My younger brother, who was about to lecture me, shut up.

He looked at me as if he had never seen me before.

"I won't do it again."

For this and everything that would have happened later. I would live up to my word. Yuhyun had a confused look on his face and carefully opened his mouth.

"By any chance, if you've had any major accident....."

"It's not like that."

He didn't trust me. He didn't believe me.

I slapped him on the arm with a smile.

"Well, I sat down and thought about it, and I realized that I seem to have been immature."

The dragon's back was cool, so it had been the perfect place for me to rest my head.

My little brother was taken aback by my awkward remarks.

"No, it's not that you're immature... no."

“Not really. Hey, can I give you a hug?”

“H, huh?”

“It’s been a long time.”

It’s been a long time for him, but not me. The cold sensation of his body was still clear under the palm of my hand.

“.....as you please.”

Yuhyun hesitantly nodded. Your big brother is just going to hug you once, little brother. What are you so embarrassed about?

Well, I’m a little embarrassed too.

I stretched out my arms and hugged my brother. The hug covered his entire body. It was smaller than before I had regressed.

“My younger brother, Han Yuhyun.”

His body was warm in my arms. I could hear the slightly accelerated beating of his heart and breath.

In my deep relief, something came out of my mouth. It was something that I usually never would have said.

“I love you.”

His body flinched and trembled. Hey, I’m embarrassed too, so don’t say anything. Just—

[The Awakening of ‘Han Yujin’ has been registered.]

...huh?

[Legendary Title ‘Perfect Caregiver’ granted!]

What?

[Title ‘Perfect Caregiver’ is in effect.

Perfect Caregiver Additional Skills – My Little One’s The Best

The growth rate of the Awakened ‘Han Yuhyun’ is doubled.

Duration – 3 days]

Whaaat?!?

The hell, what was this scam skill?

Caregiver titles were common. It was easy to receive this title if you were a parent or an older sibling who took care of and raised an Awakened person. It was even possible without blood relations.

If the dependent's Awakening Class was over C and the relationship was good, it was likely for this title to appear. If the dependent's Awakening was C Class to B Class, the title would be 'Clumsy Caregiver'. A Class was 'Ordinary Caregiver'. Finally, S Class was just 'Caregiver'.

I had thought that the title of 'Caregiver' was considered to be the highest as there were no Awakeners that were beyond S Class.

'The Perfect Caregiver? What the hell is this?'

In addition, the rate of the growth buffs was doubled.

My former title, 'Caregiver', gave an additional growth buff of up to 10 percent. It only lasted for a single day. But this was double that. Didn't this mean that you could raise a level in half a year?

'No, the benefits are more towards skills than levels. Higher grade skills grow at a frustratingly slower pace!'

Wow, this was totally a scam. If I gave someone a buff before they went into a Dungeon, they would grow at light speed.

"...hyung?"

"Uh, yeah. No."

I was so surprised that I had kept hugging him.

As I relaxed my arms and stepped back, Yuhyun's face turned a little red and he coughed.

“.....Lately I’ve been putting a lot of pressure on you. Thanks for saying this, hyung.”

“Th, thank you.”

“.....”

“.....”

An awkward silence fell. Well. Hmm, hmm.

When I felt that I could no longer bear the awkwardness and wanted to break and jump out of a window, Yuhyun spoke.

“.....Do you want to have dinner with me later? It has been a long time.”

“Oh, I’d love to.”

“Yes. Well, I’ve got work to do.”

“Mm, keep up the good work.”

My brother went out and the door closed. I tore my hair out.

‘Wow, that was awkward.’

Was this what it was going to be like during dinner? I thought I said that I didn't want to eat. Cancel it now—

Suddenly

"I forgot."

Yuhyun, who I thought had left, opened the door again. It was surprising.

"Remove the Awakening Broker from your contacts."

He said, looking at the cell phone on the bed.

"I wouldn't have let you answer the phone anyway."

".....what?"

I must have made a mistake and sounded like I was going to seek out the broker.

Yuhyun has been staring at me without leaving even though he had finished speaking. ...Did he want me to delete it right now? When I picked up his cell phone and showed him that I had deleted the broker's contact information, he walked out with a satisfied expression.

My younger brother's attitude was a little tense, more so than usual.

'My status window!'

I quickly opened the status window to take a look.

[Awakened Han Yujin

Titles – Dragon Slayer (L), Perfect Caregiver (L)]

Now, wait a minute. Dragon Slayer?

‘Why are you here?’

End

Chapter 4: <My Younger Brother is Strange (2)>

I had gone back to the past. Was that not what had just happened?

‘Did the things that happened before I went back in time affect me?’

Was that why the caregiver title changed?

Before confirming the title, I checked the rest of my stats.

[Level 1

Stamina: 6 | Strength: 4 | Agility: 5 | Spirit: 4 | Mana: 2]

Well, this was the same. Excluding mana, my level 1 stats had an average value of around 5, which made them F Class.

The growth of level of Awakened stats was determined by the average level of stats from the beginning, excluding the dirty slow mana.

So, although there were often times when the rating of the stats varied as they grew, it was usually impossible for stats to increase by two Classes. It meant that a cat would never grow up to become a tiger.

[Skills

Spirit Up (E): Spirit of the target + 5% (Immediate effect, similar and/or identical skills cannot overlap), duration 30 minutes

Agility Up (E): Agility of target + 5% (Immediate effect, similarity and/or identical skills cannot overlap), duration 30 minutes]

My basic skills were also very similar to my previous ones. I used to have Strength Up instead of Spirit Up, but it probably changed because the Awakening situation had changed.

My basic buffs' skill rating was E, only one Class above the bottom. Still, it was a skill that could easily go up to D-Class if cultivated well.

'I wasn't able to raise the Class because Yuhyun kept getting in my way.'

Even if someone's stats were F Class, if their skill became D Class, their Awakening Class could be raised to E. That was why some people who had F Class stats could be considered B Class through their skills – albeit only occasionally. About a one in five million chance?

There was only one person in the world who had F Class stats but was considered A Class due to her SS Class skill. Emily Spence, a Saint who was said to be able to keep people alive with her own breath. She was an incredibly old lady and many people were of the opinion that she should have been an S Class. However, no one could help her clear an S Class Dungeon and so she eventually remained as an A Class. S Class Dungeons were too dangerous to be able to clear while protecting an F Class.

‘Once again I just barely qualified to be a Hunter.’

There were many Awakened people in the world. Originally it was not as common but when the Awakening Center would be established six months later, the grandfather of the house behind you, the boy next door, and the uncle of the house over there could all be Awakened.

But 999 of those 1,000 Awakenings had F Class stats and F Class skills. In other words, they were just ordinary people.

What was worse was that F Class skills could not be upgraded because growth was impossible.

Thus, Hunter qualifications were issued only when either the stats or skills was E Class and above. This was the reason why there were so many Awakenings but so few Hunters.

‘Now then, the title.....’

Think about this, I swallowed dryly. Not A, not S, but L. There were two Legendary titles.

There were no changes in stats.

‘Is Dragon Slayer a skill title too?’

Titles were divided into skill titles and stat titles.

Stat titles literally raised stats, while skill titles gave additional skills.

It was just too bad. Even if I couldn't have gotten L Class stats, I could have still raised my stats to B Class.

'If my stats were B Level, Yuhyun wouldn't be so overprotective of me. I have no choice but to rely on my skills.'

Come on, defensive skills. Come on, defensive skills.

I opened the Dragon Slayer title information window while praying.

[Dragon Slayer (L)

Proof of a warrior who had hunted a Grade 1 dragon (Lauchitas) on their own.

Title's Additional Skills

Poison Resistance (L)

Curse Resistance (L)

Fear Resistance (L)

Lauchitas' Natural Enemy (SS)]

There were four additional skills from the beginning, which was also legendary. Usually there were only 2 to 3 initial skills for S classes, 2 for A classes, and 1 for anything below that. In addition, titles that were B Class or higher could grow and the number of additional skills might increase.

‘The skills are all connected to Lauchitas. You could get Fire Resistance if you’ve defeated a fire dragon, and Ice Resistance if you’ve defeated an ice dragon.’

Lauchitas was a famous dragon known for its poison and curses.

I could tell how the resistance skills were supposed to work just by looking at their names, but I still checked them out.

[Poison Resistance (L) – Completely immune to poisons of Legendary level and below]

[Curse Resistance (L) – Completely immune to curses of Legendary level and below]

[Fear Resistance (L) – Completely immune to pressures of Legendary level and below]

They weren’t really good. They were trash skills.

If only I were a front line Hunter of A Class and above.

‘Where could I use this?’

There were no Dungeons that was predominantly poison or curse without physical attacks and, most of the time, attacks in general were physical in nature. Even if you were immune to both poison and curse while fighting Lauchitas, if you did not have agility or physical defense, you would have been cut finely with its claws.

‘On the other hand, if an S Class Hunter had this title, it would be very useful.’

This was putting pearls before swine, oink.

With a deep sigh, I checked the last skill, the SS Class Lauchitas’ natural enemy.

[Lauchitas’ Natural Enemy (SS) – Double the effectiveness of all skills against Lauchitas and any similar species]

Bullshit! This is awful!

The only skills I got were immunization and buffs, and double skill effectiveness in front of a giant lizard that would make me its snack! Similar species. The weakest of Lauchitas’ species was a Grade 5 dragon, and it was not a level an F Class could take.

‘Damn it, what a waste! If only these went to an S Class instead of me! Why couldn’t I give them to Yuhyun?’

If Yuhyun had double effectiveness with those filthy good skills, he would have been able to beat the Lauchitas like a dog!

“Aigoo, aigo—”

I couldn’t help but cry. My stomach was all twisted up. What a waste!

After hitting the ground for a while, I calmed down and looked at the status window again.

‘The Perfect Caregiver’s skills could still be useful.’

‘Yeah, I was supposed to live a decent life anyway. Don’t think about crawling into Dungeons, let’s just walk through life with growth buffs.’

[Perfect Caregiver (L)]

Proof of a caregiver who has nurtured a strong world-class power. The current abilities of the caregiver will be even more perfect as they are the caregiver’s charge’s past abilities +100% .]

.....what?

Wait, what is this title?

The description and the beginning of my former title, the caregiver, were the same. Proof of a caregiver who has nurtured a strong world-class power. However, the Perfect Caregiver had one more line behind it.

‘The ability of the caregiver’s charge +100%... was it when Yuhyun died and I received twice his power? Is the title Perfect Caregiver because of what I did at that time?’

Events that had happened in the past and future, events that had disappeared at the same time, were now effecting the present. It made me feel strange to think so. Was this okay? Maybe there were other side effects outside of the title.

‘But it really was worth being called Legendary.’

It was terribly difficult to achieve the conditions needed for the title.

You had to raise a strong world-class power, which had to be at least an S Class, and you needed to be twice as strong as that S Class in the past.

‘It was possible for me to get it because I had this trick called “Regression”, but in regular cases you would have to be as good as an SSS Class munchkin and also raise an S Class.’

It wasn’t like what happened back then where the caregiver could get double the buffs when their charge died; that wouldn’t fulfill the condition. It would be possible to raise one more S Class after that, but it won’t be easy. As far as I had known, I was the only Caregiver who raised an S Class.

There might have been people like me who hid their title and covered it up.

‘Then the skill is...’

How had they changed? I lowered my gaze slightly and confirmed the additional skills.

[My Little One’s The Best (L)

Final Gratitude (L)

My Child Is So Good (SS)

Promising Sprout (S)]

The number of skills was four like the Dragon Slayer title, but the rating was low. Two L Classes, one SS Class and one S Class. Of course, this was great, but it’s a bit far off compared to the other title which was also L Class.

‘But it is much more useful to me.’

I opened the My Little One’s The Best skill information window with a feeling of satisfaction. The skill name sucked, though.

[My Little One’s The Best (L) – Growth rate + 100%

Duration 3 days

Skill can be used without keywords on targets that are already Attuned

Cannot be duplicated to the same target

Cooldown 30 days for the same target

Keywords: I love you

⌘ Not applicable when target recognizes the effect of keyword

Targets who have completed Attunement (1)

Han Yuhyun (S)]

It’s good. Everything’s good.

‘The hell, why is the keyword like this?!’

I was sure it was ‘hang in there’ before! Was it because I told him I loved him? Did he get Attuned through that?

Holy shit!

‘What the hell am I supposed to do with this?!’

I mean, if it were a younger family member or an adult female partner, I could still say it. But if it were a man? If it were a child? If I have to raise an Awakened minor, I would go to jail!

And it wasn’t just telling anyone that you loved them. If the conditions of Attunement were the same as those of the past, you had to spend some time with your target. You had to talk to each other, listen to their interests, engage in emotional exchanges, and say keywords at the right time.

Or at least save their life under extreme circumstances and then... confess

Confess. Yeah, I had to confess. Hahaha.

‘.....Let’s just use it for Yuhyun.’

It’s a shame but I can’t help it. Fortunately, I just needed to say it once when I try to Attune the keywords.

.....well, it’s just one time so if there was anyone that I want to raise, I could pretend to be crazy. Ughhh.

In agony, I opened the information window for the Final Gratitude skill.

[Final Gratitude (L) – When the target of the Keyword Attunement is killed, the skills and abilities of the target can be transferred with twice the efficiency.

Duration: 7 days]

It was an old skill, the strongest skill in my last regression. Seven days was quite long, but it was only a one time use, so why was it L-Class?

‘This will be sealed.’

Not was it only better to not use it, it was also a skill that could not be revealed to others.

Think about it. Who would welcome someone whose skills involve the death of others and the stealing of abilities? It would be uncomfortable to hang out with someone like that. There would be the idea that a guy like that would stab you in the back in dangerous situations, and then survive.

That was why I never told anyone about this skill before my regression.

I checked the skill My Child Is So Good. It’s name sucked as well.

[My Child is So Good (SS) – In front of target and more than five intelligent people who can understand the Attunement keyword, the targets’ ability and skill effects + number of intelligent targets% (maximum of 100%)

Duration: 30 minutes

Cooldown time: 10 days

※Not applicable when target and surrounding intelligent people recognize the effect of the keywords.]

Keywords. The damned keywords.

I looked through the Skill Information window, but there were no keywords specified. In other words.

‘This time it’s a public confession?!’

Fuck, I can’t even use this for Yuhyun!

The skill itself was good. It was really good. If done in front of a hundred spectators, the skills and abilities of the target would double.

But why a love confession? Did they want me to lose my face?

‘And the duration is 30 minutes, I’m going to have to be right next to him.’

Thinking about it calmly, I couldn’t use the skill properly anyway. The duration of the Little One skill was 3 days so I could use it outside of the Dungeon. If I used the My Child is So Good skill outside the Dungeon, it would run out before they were even halfway closer to the boss

Besides, the number of people who could enter a Dungeon was limited.

‘Oh, this is an impossible plan.’

I really wanted to give this skill to someone else. If it were passed over to the pretty buffers and healers that were B Class or higher, it would be perfect and less objectionable.

Just +10% of the skills could boost the overall ability value and skill effects at once to A Class. This is because although there were many techniques for raising stats, there were few techniques for raising the effects of other skills. Since there were usually around 30 players allowed in an S Level Dungeon, you could be buffed up to a whopping +30%. It would've been a great help at the last boss, but it was a dirty waste on me.

I couldn't even use it properly like the Final Gratitude. It made me sigh.

'The rating is good but it's mostly bullshit.'

I didn't expect much, but I checked out the last skill, Promising Sprout.

[Promising Sprout (S) – You can check the predicted Awakening Class of an Unawakened person, Awakening can be optimized for targets already Attuned to the keyword.

Cooldown for Optimized Awakenings: 30 days]

.....huh? Wait a minute.

'This is amazing?'

Just being able to check the expected Awakening Class was a huge jackpot. It meant that we potential S Class or A Class Awakenings could be pulled over in advance. However, the biggest jackpot was the ability to optimize the Awakening.

Approximately three years later, it was found out that the post-Awakening ability varied with the situation at the time of Awakening. For example, Awakening via the danger of drowning resulted in

water-related skills, and Awakening via the danger of falling resulted in In addition, someone who both worked in the field and dealt with clients on the phone could plant manipulation skills and even hypnotic skills after Awakening.

In my case, I was Awakened in a different sort of situation compared to before, so my titles and skills had changed.

There had even been studies showing that Awakening Classes were also affected by Awakening situations. Even if you have the potential to be an A Class Awakening, your Class might end up below B if the Awakening situation was not good.

However, it wasn't easy to adjust Awakening situations to suit people. Not only now but also five years later, it was impossible to optimize Awakening situations

However, through the Promising Sprout skill, it was now possible to optimize Awakening situations.

'The best quality and the best skill compared to the others!'

This means that I could pick up the best rookies once a month.

Wow this really was the best, it was good enough to be L-Grade.....

'.....the keyword again.'

Oh, seriously. It's seriously dirty! Serious, I, I!

.....I should still use it. Sob sob.

End

Chapter 5: <My Brother is Strange (3)>

Since I had some time until evening, I decided to go to Korea Hunter Association.

‘I just want to get an F Grade.’

I intended to reveal only the basic skills and hide the titles and additional skills. If you have one L-level or S-level defense skill, with F-Grade stats, the L to S-Level assist skill is too much. If the owner of skills that can be used outside the dungeon, like My Little One’s The Best or Promising Sprout, can’t protect themselves, it was like turning on a billboard saying ‘Kidnap Me’.

They could kidnap me and then blackmail and torture me into using my skills.

If you have assist skills you want to use during combat, you and your party might die, so it’s better to party normally. However, if it is a skill that can be used outside the dungeon and is not related to combat, it is enough to keep it as a slave without paying for it..

In fact, there were a lot of victims out there.

‘That’s why I hid the title of Caregiver.’

I would have been able to raise the Hunter rating immediately if I told the association, but I was too afraid to do so. I thought I couldn’t be protected because I believed I had lost my brother.

What should we do this time?

‘Yuhyun I want to share with you all my skills to help the guild, can you protect me?’

Dragon Slayer is hard to explain, so I can only talk about the Perfect Caregiver. I think you can be a big brother just by doing a good job. If I recruit a good-looking rookie, I’ll give him a spot rather than kick him out of the guild this time.

I opened the door in a pleasant fancy. And my eyes met with another’s.

“Uh.....”

A man over 190cm with a tall and muscular figure leaned against the wall of the hallway in front of my door and stared at me bluntly.

Class A Awakening Kim Sunghan. (김성한)

It is one of Han Yuhyun’s faithful right-hand man, the Haeyeon guild leader, and is a battlehunter specialized in defense. Yuhyun’s loyalty to me was so high that he thought I was an eyesore. ...From the look on his face, he seems to be still think that.

But why are you here? Standing in the road... I was passing through.

“Well... How are you?”

Kim Sunghan completely ignored my greeting. What? This didn’t happen before. When I heard Yuhyun scold me, I got angry and I thought I’d take care of it, so I just stormed out screaming, “Don’t worry.”

"I have a few things to see. Work hard."

I'm going to pass by.

"That's not possible."

A heavy bass blocked me. It didn't just end with a voice, but he even caught my arm.

"The guild leader ordered me to keep you from going out."

".....pardon?"

Why? Did he think I was going to go find the Awakening Broker again. He didn't believe me? ...I wouldn't believe me either

"I don't want to get into an accident. I'm just going out for a minute and I'll be right back. It's only an hour."

It takes 10 minutes from here to Hunter's Association by taxi, and there will be fewer people on weekdays, so it will be over in an hour. But the hand that grabbed my arm did not budge.

“Go straight into the room, please.”

“No, really, just for a second.....”

When I was faced with increasingly fierce eyes, my voice decreased. Just then.

[The pressure has been annulled!]

The fear-resistance skill effect has been activated. But even if you have skills, what can you do? Even if you're not scared, you'll still get hit. It's so useless.

“Alright. Going in, going in.”

I turned around, brushing away Kim Sunghan's hand. In front of a Class A, you are a flea and he is too inflexible to talk sense into. Oh, by the way, what are his skills?

Kim Sunghan's eyes narrowed as I turned around again. Dude. Staring won't do anything. The status window popped up with I used Promising Sprout.

[Awakened Person – Kim Sunghan

Current Stat Class A

Awakening Available: Stats A to S

Optimization of Initial Skill

Indomitable Body (S) Failed to Obtain

Regenerative Power (S) Failed to Obtain

Shield of the Earth (A) Obtained]

What a waste! I almost shouted out loud. You've got two S-Level Skills that can be obtained, your maximum level is S-Level! If I recall, Kim Sunghan's initial skills were the Shield and Footprints of the Earth.

'Wow, that's too bad. Can't a man who's already Awakened be Reawakened? Kim Sunghan's Optimization Awakening!'

[The target's keyword Attunement is incomplete.]

Oh, keyword.

[Target that has been Awakened cannot undergo Optimal Awakening.]

Message windows appeared one after another. I can't do that either. It can't be helped...

[My Little One's The Best (L) Single Skill Concentration of Growth enables acquisition of new skills, including failed optimization skills.]

Wow! Was it possible to focus on one skill? Anyway, the dirty system's description is not good enough. There were not many hidden effects that were found in belatedly in this way. Even without an open message window, I think there's an additional effect...? There is a skill that I want.

Anyway it's amazing that you can get an S-Level skill that you previous failed to obtain, jackpot... Jackpot..... I won.....

'Fuck, keyword.'

I looked up at Kim Sunghan. A rude man who is sending a glare to the me who is not going back in. He's 20 centimeters taller than me, and he's a man with a loud voice.

Yeah, I can't. I'll never do it.

I went into the room, smiling as if nothing had happened.

Then I inwardly shouted to myself.

‘Replace keywords!!’

No, reset, reset. I want to go back again. Just for one day. No, just for one hour.

I said that I wasn’t going to do it but I’m sorry, I’m sorry, it would be a dirty waste!

‘It would be helpful if the number of S-Levels in the guild increased by one. Yeah, I’ll explain it to Yuhyun first and.....’

Muttering under my breath, I felt like I was missing something. ...something about keywords? Something about telling others about my skills?

An unforeseen circumstance hits the back of the head.

Let’s settle the situation calmly. Now, I.

‘.....I’m locked up.’

I’m trapped. No one but an A-Level Awakened is standing guard at the door. It’s too much to simply prevent me from seeking out an accident. C-Level , or even D-Level, is enough to stop me

‘Yuhyun, you.....’

What are you thinking? This has never happened before the regression.

I walked around the room and then sat down on my bed.

‘If this situation right now is just to protect me.’

It occurred to me that Yuhyun had immediately deleted the broker’s contact information and didn’t let me contact him. Things have been strange since then.

Even though I am weaker than him, I’m still his older brother. I’m an adult and no longer obsessed with being a hunter, I can live alone well enough. Moreover, unlike before the regression, it is already known that there was absolutely no need to do this.

In the first place, Yuhyun doesn't have the right to lock me up, does he?

I rolled my head around and pulled out my cell phone. I'll ask him myself.

At the end of a short beep, Yu-hyun answered the phone.

"Uh, it's nothing much. I was going to go out for a while, but Kim Sunghan blocked me. He said it was your order?"

[Where are you going?]

The Hunter Association..... I guess I'd better not say that now.

"Just home."

[Why home?]

"Do I need a reason to go back to my house? I will come back in the evening."

The voice over the cell phone paused for a moment, but it started again with a lower voice.

[That's a little different from what Sunghan said.]

"Uh, huh?"

[He said you'd be back in an hour.]

"No, that's because he was blocking me. I mean, I was not going anywhere else."

Why is he so sensitive? The uncertainty in my heart became a little bit bigger.

[If you do not have anything special to do, just stay put. The house is... hyung just join the guild.]

"What?"

[You do not have to live separately. It's not like the world is safe these days. There's no dungeon near hyung's house, but you don't know when and where it might happen, and what if it suddenly pops up?]

No, the next 5 years are safe.

[I'll get you ready for the move.]

"What move, hey!"

[I have to go out, so I will not be able to reach you until evening. If you need anything, tell Sunghan.]

"No, wait a minute! Yoohyun!"

The telephone line went dead. I looked at my cell phone, feeling both flustered and dumb.

'Is this also one of the side effects of regression?'

I think my brother's personality has changed a lot. What's wrong with him?

'The title of Perfect Caregiver, I shouldn't reveal it.'

Right now I'm still known as an Unawakened. If I reveal that I have a very useful assist skill, I might not be able to take one step out of the room. ...I can't even get out right now.

Damn it, I'm gonna have to hide it for now and take a look into it.

'If Yuhyun is going to keep acting weird, I'll have to build my own power.'

It is possible only with the title of Perfect Caregiver.

First of all, I have to visit A-Levels and S-Levels of the future and Awaken them. I wish I was younger. I'm persuading children to Awaken.....

'...This is either a conman or a child trafficker.'

Well, I'm not getting paid for it, and I'll really Awaken them!

I will need to write a contract to make sure the awakened kids do not betray me. You'll protect me as my Hunter for a year without revealing the secret of your Awakening, it'll be enough. If you can, keep it for the rest of your life! I want to say, but there is no contract item that can keep the S-Level in place for a long time. The longest was ten years.

If I sweep up all the A to S Levels and using the Growth skill as bait to make them stay, a big guild will soon be completed.

'Or maybe in the middle it would be okay to merge with Hayeon Guild.'

If I bring a lot of A to S Levels, Yuhyun will have to acknowledge me. You want to lock me up again? I'm not going to get caught because I have these kids to protect me.

All right, who's the first one to get hooked up.

Park Yerim, an ice witch who will become an A-Level Awakening after three years. It'd be nice. She was able to quickly rise up to S-Level after awakening as an A-Level.

'I was living in Seoul. I once saw an interview where I had lost my parents to the first Dungeon shock and lived near a relative who owns a restaurant near Myeong-dong Station. The age is now... fifteen?'

...A girl in middle school. Keywords being middle school girl.....

I am not a lolicon! I like adult women! This is just the bottom line for awakening!

Chapter 6: <My Brother is Strange (4)>

By the time the world was getting used to dungeons, Hunters had become a famous money-making profession.

Not even mentioning S-Levels, even B-Levels could make whopping amounts of money. The annual income of C-Levels is also high. Even in D-Levels, you could make 100 million won. Below, not only the E-Levels, but also for F-Levels, if there is adequate combat aptitude, the income would be better than small and medium sized business men.

Mana Stones from dungeons have become a new source of energy, and also by-products for the development of new medicines and useful new materials. In addition, magic and science were combined and various new technologies have been created.

Is this world, Han Yuhyun who is all, handsome, and famous for his quickly developing Haeyeon Guild, do I need to explain any further? He is barely twenty years old, young and promising. (?: 창창하다 못해 어리다)

Even with just one interview, viewers' ratings were several times higher, and magazines with photos sold out instantly.

'If it's let slip that he's a family man, the reaction is going to be explosive.'

I muttered inwardly, looking at Yuhyun's back as he is pulling out a pot from the spacious induction kitchen. Of course, I thought we were going out for dinner. I never thought that we would be eating homemade cooking in his house.

For your information, Yu-hyun's house was on the top floor of the Haeyeon Guild building. It is not widely known for security reasons, but it accounts for half of the floor. It is a place where people can only enter via filthily expensive mini-portals, and not stairs, elevators, or doors.

"I did not know you were a good cook."

Sitting at the dining table, I watched my brother finishing his cooking and accidentally let that slip.

“It’s better now that I’ve been watching what I eat.”

“What? Why? You’ve got a lot of money.”

Not even mentioning the ability to buy anything you want to eat after you’ve Awakened, you’re making enough money to hire a top-notch chef. He answered my question with some reservations.

“Now I have to detox items, unlike before. That’s why I feel more comfortable cooking my own food. Even now, when I go into dungeons, I carry my own dry rations. Dungeons are the most dangerous place to be.”

“.....detox? You do that?”

What did I hear? I mean, there were some bastards who put poisons and curses in the food, so I had to cook for myself... was that it?

“.....”

I didn’t know. In the past, I thought that he was just a lucky, hotshot S-Level Awakening, and

that he would only suffer a little after my return. To think that his life was being threatened, I never could have dreamt that it was such a mess.

For me, Yuhyun was so strong that I couldn't even look at him. As soon as he Awakened, he got everyone's attention and became popular. I saw only the term "S-Level" and closed my eyes to everything else.

"Don't look like that. This was the result of my choice."

Yuhyun, who came to the table, said in a soft voice.

"The tall tree catches the wind. You think it's nice to have a kid out there trying to make a guild for himself? If you just entered the right guild and made a proper living, you would not have to face such threats on your life."

I couldn't do what he did. He laughed at me.

"That's why I've been upset with my relationship with hyung all this time. It is also the result of my choice to monitor, interfere with, and bind hyung in the name of protection. I made my guild, knowing that they would touch my only blood related relative." (?: 그놈들이 하나뿐인 혈육에 손 댈 거라는 사실을 알면서도 나는 내 길드를 만들었어.)

“.....Why did you not tell me?”

“At first I didn’t want to burden you... and later I thought you wouldn’t understand.”

...Certainly, if it was before my regression, I would either yell at my brother to let me live on my own or resent him.

“But I was totally wrong. You were still thinking about me and worried about me like when I was a kid. I misunderstood hyung without knowing it. I’m sorry.”

Ugh, my conscience hurts. I was just going to loaf around after my regression. If you say these things, I feel like crap.

“.....I didn’t do much good either.”

“You were interrupted with everything you tried to do without knowing why. It’s understandable.”

The inside of my chest was itchy. The warm ticklish feeling became stronger as the younger brother took a bite of the meal.

It was good to go back to the past.

It was the best choice I've ever made.

"I roughly understand the situation. But isn't it too much for today? You don't have to do all this to keep me safe. So far, nothing big has happened."

As soon as I expressed my desire to leave, Yuhyun's face stiffened up.

"No."

"Why? I'll be careful. I was okay this morning."

"This morning is different from now. The only reason hyung could have done so much is because I had cut off relationships with you. It's illegal to lay a hand on an Unawakened and people would think it's not worth the risk."

A heavier voice followed.

"But if I command the Haeyeon Guild to take note of hyung's safety, and ask them to patrol your residence, my enemies will start targeting you. They'll already start keeping an eye on you just because I brought you into my house."

“Then it’s better to keep pretending to be on bad terms on the outside, right?”

“You said you were okay with it.”

“.....what?”

When did I? I don’t have a single memory that allowed him to have me live in captivity.

Yuhyun replied with a cheeky face.

“I’m sorry and I love you. Honestly, it’s my fault and I’m supposed to be responsible for it, but you shouldered it. That’s as good as permission.”

Is, is that how you interpreted it? This kid’s weird, too!

“Don’t be ridiculous! Life in captivity is a no-no!”

“Just put up with it for three years. I’ll wipe them out in three years.”

Don’t laugh as you say it! And it’s not three years but five years! It took five years!

Damn it, the right choice is bullshit. The heat extended across the back of my neck and my back straightened, but I tried to calm my mind with deep breathing. The guy in front of me is a S-level awakening before he's my brother. That's a guild that's experienced many hardships. Emotionally, you won't get a scratch.

I could never win with force and this had to be solved through dialogue somehow.

"How can I live in imprisonment for three years? I already get depressed if I stay in the room for only a month. Even if there were people who were after me, it wouldn't be hard to make a fuss in broad daylight. And if you do not mind, I can stick with a guardian. I can go with Sunghan or something."

"Of course I'll let you out sometimes."

"How often?"

I have arrived here in the present. I'm sitting with my younger brother, not even my parents. At my age, my parents wouldn't even say anything. How did this happen?

"It depends on the schedule. If we start hitting the dungeons, we won't be able to hire A-Levels to protect you. You can't leave it to B-Levels."

The bottom line is that all you need is an A-Level with a lot of time. I opened my mouth with confidence.

“Then you’ll let me go if I get a dedicated A-Level guard.”

“...you’re going to get an A-level?”

“Yes.”

Yuhyun’s eyes, that were filled with wonder, suddenly turned sharp.

“Hyung, you’ve Awakened.”

“.....huh?”

H, how did he know? This jerk’s dirty fast on the uptake.

“Even in the morning, you were going to meet a broker, so you must have been Unawakened, so when did you Awaken? Right before you met me? Right after we met? That’s why you gave up on contacting the broker. Your destination would have been the Hunter’s Association.”

...I have nothing to say. I'm going to lie down.

"I'm afraid the rating is less than D."

"You can tell that?"

"C-Levels or higher would be a little awkward as they are not able to adapt to excessive physical abilities. Especially if muscle strength exceeds the average B-Level, you would not be able to adapt for three or four days. You wouldn't be able to control your strength so you would destroy everything you touch."

I guess so.

"Did that happen to you to?"

"Yeah. However, the adaptability of S-Levels is high, and it gets better in a day. Of course, if you have extremely high mental strength or mana, it won't be noticeable even if it's above C-Level."

"I'm an ordinary F-Level."

“Initial skill, special skill? If you are confident that you can get an A-Level, you will be able to know the Awakening Level, Awaken the target, or both. It should be at least Grade C.”

It's S Level. I can't say anything in front of him. Given that Yoo Hyun's expression is very shaky, I think it's better to speak less about it.

“It's a special Awakening skill, and it's C-Grade. I can awaken the Unawakened and roughly know the expected Level of Awakening.”

“How accurate is it?”

“It's usually half and half. It's either strong or weak. I can't tell you apart from Sunghan. Perhaps B-Level or less. There's a 30-day cooldown per usage. If it weren't for the waiting time, it would be Class A.”

He nodded at my words. His face, which had been shadowed, also lit up slightly.

“That's enough to get caught, but I'm not going to get shot. (?: 그 정도면 들통 난다 해도 크게 노력하지는 않겠어.) It would be useful if you could find out more than grade B in advance, but the waiting time is too long. Even if you find an A-Level or S-Level, there's no guarantee that you can sign a contract. The temptation of Awakening cannot be used because there is going to be an Awakening Center.”

“Awakening Center?”

I pretended not to know.

“The Awakening Mechanism has been roughly identified, so the construction of the center is about to begin. It’s the association’s goal to make sure that in the next half year, it would be safe for anyone to Awaken. Each of the top guilds has already talked about it, and they’ve invested. I’ve invested too.”

“That’s great. The number of Awakenings will increase tremendously?”

“The official announcement is in four months, so don’t go around talking.”

“Are you going to let me meet someone to talk to?”

Instead of answering, the smile came back. Why don’t you let this madman lock you up in a prison cell?

“Anyway, I’ll find an A-Level to protect me, so just give me a chance.”

“It wouldn’t be easy once every 30 days. A-Levels are not common.”

“But it won’t take three years. If I’m lucky, you can find it right away.”

Of course I don't need luck. I already know who's an A-Level.

Yuhyun's mouth opened after a while.

"Okay, if you really sign a contract with an A-Level, I'm not going to overprotect you. They have to have an offensive or a defense ability."

Finally, I was given permission. He's such a horrible, strict little brother. Although there was one more condition, Park Yerim was famous as a combat wizard, so that was no problem. The problem was the keyword, dammit.

Chapter 7: <The Hunter Association (1)>

Before going to find Park Ye-rim, I headed to the Hunter's Association to register my Awakening and purchase contract items.

The Korean Hunter Association.

At the start it was a government-established Awakening Registry, and then, with the power of the three largest guilds, it became an association. Other Hunter Associations abroad have also been created through similar processes. Currently, the government-run Association has a 51-percent stake with the government, 30 percent with the three largest guilds, and 19 percent with other guilds, but after five years, the power of the guilds becomes bigger and the majority of the shares are taken away.

To be exact, the Haeyeon Guild took it.

‘The more I think about it, the more I felt that pre-regression Yuhyun was crazy.’

The leader of such a great guild risked his life to save a useless older brother. I don’t understand.

But thanks to it, my life was saved, I regressed, and I got two L-Class titles, so I gotta endure Yoo Hyun ‘s crazy things, what can I do?

There were quite a few people in the Hunter’s Association waiting room waiting to register their Awakening. It was impossible for most of the Awakened to do Hunters’ work with skills and stats being F-Level, aka Double F, but they still came to register. This was because the government gave subsidies to promote the registration of people with Awakenings. As the registration of Awakened people alone provided a subsidy of 1 million won, everyone came to the association with money to burn.

I drew a waiting table and sat down on the chair. The number says it’ll take some time.

“Hey, isn’t that the A-Level Hunter, Kim Sunghan?

“What? Really?

People sitting in the waiting room began to chat when they recognized Kim Sunghan, who followed me. The A-Levels’ popularity falls short of that of S-Levels, but Kim Sunghan was a hunter well-known for his face and name. Half of this is influenced by Yuhyun, and the other half is due to his performance during the Break of the Class A dungeon in the Dongdaegu area.

A Dungeon Break occurs when the number of monsters in the dungeon exceeds the capacity of the dungeon. Monsters would break out of the dungeon, creating a dangerous situation, but nowadays they rarely happen due to good management. There has been no known case of an already discovered dungeon having a Dungeon Break, but it has occurred occasionally when the discovery of a new dungeon is delayed.

“But why are you here?”

"I came in with him."

People's eyes turned to the me who was sitting next to Kim Sunghan.

"He's the only one sitting there with the A-Level."

"Is he an important person? It looks like you're standing by like you're guarding him. You're here to escort him?"

"The waiting ticket seems like he must be here to register his Awakening but if there is an A-Level along with him, it doesn't seem to be a joke. It must be an S-Level rookie from the guild."

No, it's an F-Level. I looked up at Kim Sung-han and said little.

"Sit down."

"No thank you."

"Shouldn't you sit?"

"It's better to stand in case anything happens."

No matter what happens, this is still the inside of the Hunter's Association. There's even a first batch of people here to register their Awakening.

‘Let’s see if there are any good newcomers.’

I used Promising Sprout to check out the stats of a man who was busy talking.

[Awakened Person – Shin Minho

Current Stat Class F

Awakening Available: Stats F to E

Optimization of Initial Skill

Quick Feet (E) Failed to Obtain

Jump (E) Obtained

Throw (F) Obtained]

The Awakening Stats fell a grade and not all the Initial Skills were gotten. However, he would still get a Hunter’s license because he had an E-Grade skill.

‘Ugh.’

When I checked out two more FF-Class people, a short pain flared up in my head and disappeared just as suddenly. It was a sign that I had consumed half of my mana.

‘The Promising Sprout skill’s status check is limited to 6 times.’

No wonder my magic stat is 2.

Health and mana were not shown in the status window. It would be nice if it was displayed as a red and blue stick like a game, but because it was not, I had to guess the condition of the body.

If it’s health, it’s fine to see by eye. That one’s half dead, that one’s dying. I was able to roughly tell, but the problem was mana. Five years later, people still have not invented the way to check mana levels. However, if you consume half of your mana, you will feel a short headache, and you have less than ten percent left, you will lose consciousness.

I’m glad that passive skills like poison resistance do not usually consume mana.

‘Triggering the optimal awakening or using the Little One skill will have a higher cost than a status check.’

My Little One’s The Best is an L-Grade skill, so it will eat unpleasantly eat mana. For Yuhyun’s case, it was alright to use it passively as a one-time conferment effect, but if I use it now, I might fail and pass out.

‘I’m sure we’ll have to raise my level a little.’

To do that, I would have to go into the dungeon, but if Yuhyun finds out he will jump in to stop me. I will have to sneak in.

“Number 56 to 65, please come in.”

The people who came here first got up and followed the Association’s staff. My turn came only after another group of them had gone in.

As I walked in, the partition hanging in front of the desk was hanging down. The staff handed out a sheet of paper to each person. On the paper was the application for the registration of Awakening, there was a column to write the stat and skill in addition to the personal information. After writing and ensuring that there are no mistakes or falsehoods, the Awakening level will be recorded.

I picked up the pen on the desk and began to fill in the empty space. Only the stats and basic skills were written and no titles were revealed. The stats will be measured immediately, but skills and titles cannot be measured and hence cannot be confirmed if hidden.

‘Although there were people who exaggerate their abilities in the beginning, few people would write it down.’

I don’t think people deliberately put a lower grade unless it’s a unique case like me. People would treat you differently once they see you have a lower grade. In addition, there are many benefits for those who are C-Level or above.

“Is he an S-Level rookie?”

“Haeyeon Guild’s new S-Level, whom A-Level Kim Sunghan escorted?”

No. No, you guys. It’s been a while since the speculation has already been made. You there, where the hell are you calling in such a hurry? Ugh, high ranking people in the Association are coming over. Surely you did not come here because of me?

“Good morning. I am Seok Kimyung, head of the registration department of the Hunter’s Association.”

He bowed his head to me. Fuck, don’t. Don’t say hello.

“If you don’t mind, could I check your application for a moment?”

“.....here you go.”

I was already starting to feel embarrassed but I handed him my application. Seok Kimyung, who saw the single digit stats and the E-Grade skills, frowned slightly. Hey, I only have five L-Grade skills.

“...hm. Then have a nice day.”

Checking out the application form and dropping formal speech right away. The polite attitude disappeared right. How horrible. It is horrible, but it happened a lot even before the regression.

“What, so it wasn’t an S-Level?”

“I can’t see his attitude.”

“But why did he pretend to be an S-Level?”

I’ve never done that, you bastards! What the fuck are they doing when they were the ones who misjudged?

‘It reminds me of the people who used to write novels about me and Yuhyun.’

Ugh... I’m sick thinking of it. My inferiority complex has contributed about 30% to the gossip trash explosion. Yuhyun was not as good as portrayed in the article that praised him, but he was always appearing in comparison with his incompetent older brother.

With a glance, I submitted my application and headed towards the lower-level ability measurement room.

“Do you have any items you are using or carrying?”

The measurement room staff asked in a clerical tone.

“No.”

“Please stand on the meter.”

As I was told, I climbed into the measuring instrument that looked like a circular disk. A measuring instrument made by using items from dungeon lit up weakly, and soon the results came up.

“Stamina 6, strength 4, agility 5, spirit 4, magic 2 has been measured.”

That’s correct.

“Your skills are the E-Grade Spirit Up and the E-Grade Agility Up, is that correct?”

“Yeah.”

“Please use your skills on the helper.”

A helper came forward to confirm the usage of buff skills. I was worried that I was lacking mana, but fortunately no mishaps occurred when I used my skills. I need to buy some mana potions.

After I finished checking my abilities, I went into the photobooth and took a picture. Not only pictures

the size of the ID photo but also pictures of your whole body, back and front, are checked and immediately stored in the Association database. I then waited for a while. Upon hearing my name being called, I approached the certificate issuer.

“Mr. Han Yujin is an F-Level Awakening and meets the Hunter requirements. You can be issued a Hunter’s license and enter Dungeons after completing the basic program for new Hunters. Would you like to apply for the program?”

“I will apply to join Haeyeon Guild.”

Rookie Hunters who have already entered or is scheduled to enter guilds, can skip the basic program under the guild’s guarantee. It was because of the much higher quality of the rookie Hunter education in the guild.

I passed the Haeyeon Guild’s guarantee to the staff. The employee in charge of checking guarantees tapped their fingers on the keyboard.

“Please give me your account number to receive the subsidy. The subsidy can only be accepted in your name.”

“Baekil Bank number 995-04-109982.”

I got one million won in pocket money. Long live the Association.

A Hunter’s license was issued immediately after receiving a guild guarantee. The Hunter’s license was the same size as a resident registration card and had a number, rating, and your name, along with a photo of proof. I took the license and asked the staff.

“Is there any way to the Hunter’s mall from here?”

It's annoying to have a watchdog tagging along when you go outside. You don't have to follow me inside the Association.

"You can use the elevator at the end of the right corridor."

"Thank you."

As the employee said, I went up the elevator and immediately came out a side door that led straight into the shopping mall. ATM machines were seen near the door.

'Let's check to see how much Yuhyun gave us.'

Taking a card out of my wallet, I approached the ATM machine. A gift card dedicated to Hunter's shopping mall. When I said I needed money to buy a contract, Yuhyun said that he had put in a moderate amount of money. It's a bit embarrassing to get an allowance from my little brother, but all the items for Hunters are expensive, so I can't cut it with just my poor wallet.

'It is said that an A-Level contract could go up to 10 million won.'

Ideally I would buy an S-Level contract but I did not know how much it would cost. It would be more than twice the price of an A-Level contract. I needed a mana potion so I'll just buy an A-Level contract.

When I put the card in the machine and checked the balance, the number quickly appeared on the screen.

[Balance: 1,000,000,000 won]

.....how many zeros are there?

‘Yuhyun, are you insane?’

Chapter 8: <The Hunter’s Association (2)>

The money in the gift card was a whopping one billion won. Wow, I just told you that I needed money and you threw me a billion won. Is this really possible? Don’t you need to pay gift tax? Are S Classes exempt from gift taxes?

Dazed, I put the card away and entered the shopping mall.

The Hunter’s Mall was located from the 3rd to the 6th level of the Hunter’s Association building. On the 3rd and 4th floor, you can purchase items that are C Class or below, on the 5th floor you could purchase B Class items and on the 6th floor you could purchase A Class items. S Class items were only sold in auctions.

Since I was sure that I had enough money, I went directly up to the 6th floor. There were only a few guests on the 6th floor, along with a line of neatly dressed staff standing in a line at regular intervals like mannequins.

“Where are the S Class contracts?”

When I asked the question to the nearest female employee, she replied with a beautiful and kind smile.

“I’ll show you right away, sir. Would you please come this way?”

The employee guided me to a drawing room where the reception room was located, surrounded by glass walls. I looked around the drawing room and saw that there were a few reception rooms situated in this place.

When I sat down on the sofa, another female employee asked if I wanted a drink.

“Coffee.”

“Do you have any beans that you like?”

It’s just a Mac X..... But there was no instant coffee in this place.

“Uh, orange juice please.”

They will not ask about the different types of oranges. Fortunately, the staff only asked if I wanted ice before squeezing the orange straight into an expensive-looking glass.

‘It’s delicious.’

Was it an expensive orange? While I was sipping juice, a man who looked like he was around his mid to late 30s came over and greeted me with a 90 degree bow.

“My name is Ki Yunseo, the manager of the Hunter’s Mall on the 6th floor.”

Even though the contract was probably cheaper than the items on the sixth floor, the person in charge showed up. Isn’t this service a bit too much? The person in charge sat opposite me with a polished smile.

“S Class contracts are rare so people who are looking to buy them have to wait for around a few minutes. I have just sent workers down to the warehouse; I thank you for your understanding.”

“Oh, yeah. That’s okay.”

I nodded. Although the S Class contract was a decent price, it was still rare for someone to buy it.

After all, all the S Classes in South Korea were guild masters, with an exception of just one person. Since I was going to sign a contract with an S Class, it appeared that I was either of a similar level or I had a deep connection with them. That was why the person in charge came all the way out here to flatter me.

It wasn't long before the staff brought in a luxurious leather case.

"There are currently 5 types of S Class contracts in our shopping mall. The most popular one is the Ability-Reduction contract."

The person in charge said, taking out a contract made of parchment paper from the case and placed it onto the table.

"It's a contract with S Class Hunter Clown Marionette Manuella Shusler's S Class curse skill; if the terms of the contract are broken, your total stats will be reduced by 20% for a year. It's a strong contract that cannot be escaped unless you use a skill or item to nullify the SS Class curse. Actually, nothing can resolve the curse apart from a saint. The contract is valid for up to 10 years."

Wait, so I won't receive any disadvantages for breaking the contract? My curse resistance is L Level. An S Level curse wouldn't so much as tickle it.

'This could be quite useful.'

The thought surfaced in my head for a bit but I quickly got rid of it. I wouldn't be the target of the contract, and even if an F Class' stat were to drop by 20%, there would be not much of a difference. If it wasn't a contract from the association, which would just cause a decrease in skills and stats, but an illegal contract that was life-threatening, I could take advantage of it, but I had no intention to use such a contract.

"There are also Skill Level Decrease and Seal contracts. However, since it is only limited to one less than S Class, it is less efficient for someone with SS Class skills. The Permanent Stat Reduction contract could work as well, but the other Hunter would not easily accept it."

Even if they wanted to keep the contract, they would be reluctant to do so.

I bought a 1 year Stat Drop contract and a 1 month Skill Seal Contract. In a flash, 50 million won disappeared. Nevertheless, there was still 950 million won remaining. That little brother really doesn't know how much money is worth.

I will have to thank him for the money he gave me.

"Please show me your mana-boosting equipment as well. The type that can be worn, and the type that will increase mana by a fixed amount, not by percentage."

The price of equipment that increase stats by percentages was much higher, but they had no use to me. After all my mana stat was only 2. The world ranked Hunters would rush in for equipment that gives a +50% to stats, but a C Class and below equipment that simply gave a +5 to stats was much better for me.

Soon, velvet-wrapped luxury cases were placed on the table.

"There are all equipment with certificates from the Korea Hunter's Association A Class Appraiser Park Jiyeon."

The person in charge said, opening the cases one after another. People were able to know the performance of equipment after they were worn, but they could sometimes be cheated through magic or curses. Therefore expensive equipment would come with a certificate.

"This is a red lumelusus ring. It is an A Class accessory that can raise your mana by 30."

Mana was a stat that was hard to increase, therefore an A Class equipment would only increase the stat by 30. I don't think one ring has enough mana.

‘This is really fancy.’

The size of the red jewel in the silver ring was as large as a quail egg. There were even diamond-like gems wrapped around it. How do you wear this?

“This is the bracelet of Auris Hall. It is also an A Class accessory that can increase your mana stat.”

There was a bracelet woven with walnut-sized blue beads followed by shimmering sapphire necklace and then a leather ribbon headband, each placed in front of me one after the other. Why did they all look so bad?

“As you know, the sex ratio of male Hunters in the upper levels is more than twice the number of female Hunters, so simple accessories are sold out more quickly.”

The person in charge told me this excuse after seeing the wrinkled expression on my face. Still, wasn’t this too much? Plus, rings and bracelets are embarrassing to wear regardless of gender.

“These are the Black Fairy Earrings. They are A Class accessories that can raise your mana stat by 29. This is the last A Class mana enhancement equipment product that we have; the remaining products are all C Class or less.”

It’s not even B Class but C Class. I worried as I looked at the Black Fairy Earrings. They were simple earrings with small black gems that were as small as a grain of rice. I hate that I would have to pierce my ears, but I’m sure that this accessory would hardly catch anyone’s eye.

“What is the stat increase for C Class equipment?”

I still asked, just in case.

“The stats can be increased by 5 or 6 points.”

No way. That’s too much of a difference. If it were an increase of at least 10 points it would have been worth it.

Eventually, I purchased the Black Fairy Earrings. The price was 230 million won. This was considered cheap for mana-boosting A Class equipment. The price of a few hundred million won was considered cheap. Truly, the upper Hunter society was a completely different world.

The earrings were put on without the need for piercings. With it, my mana increased to over 30.

I also bought some gloves that increased stamina and strength, and a belt that increased agility.

[Awakened Han Yujin

Titles – Dragon Slayer (L), Perfect Caregiver (L)

Level 1

Stamina: 6(+51) | Strength: 4(+20) | Agility: 5(+16) Spirit: 4 | Mana: 2(+29)]

Equipment

Black Fairy Earrings (A), Manticore Leather Gloves (A), Lightweight Belt (B)

Skills

Spirit Up (E): Spirit of the target + 5% (Immediate effect, similar and/or identical skills cannot overlap), duration 30 minutes

Agility Up (E): Agility of target + 5% (Immediate effect, similarity and/or identical skills cannot overlap), duration 30 minutes]

‘Except for mana, all my stats are now at the average of 26.5. Those are C Class stats.’

Although it was unbalanced with a concentration towards physical stats, I had still raised three of my stats with a reasonable amount of money. Of course, if my level increases the rating of the stats would drop sharply. That was why people preferred equipment that increased stats via percentages.

I had purchased two more pieces of equipment, but nearly 500 million won was still left. I had always thought that if I had money, I would be able to spend it all but the surprisingly the amount of money wasn’t going down by a lot. I couldn’t use this gift card outside.

I bought 20 lesser mana potions and a set of health potions. And then.

‘Let’s buy armor and weapons.’

With good equipment, an F Class lower dungeon could be cleared.

“Please show me dungeon equipment that can increase stats by a fixed number.”

There were so many options for those that this time, instead of showing me the items themselves, a catalog book was given to me. There was a large variety of weapons available, but there were only a few things that I could use. I mainly used the spear before the regression. I had only partaken in simple battles where I placed buffs on people from behind and also stabbed things with my spear. The reason I was able to kill Lauchitas was thanks to the fact that I had received some of Yuhyun’s combat skills along

with his memories.

I bought a pair of daggers, a pike, and light armor. They were all placed in my inventory as they could not be worn normally. It was okay to wear armor but if you were caught carrying a dungeon weapon, you would get a fine and be penalized. If a Hunter had accumulated more than a number of penalties within a fixed period of time, their Hunter's qualification would be suspended. If this was repeated a few times, the qualification would be taken away.

'Now roughly how much did I spend? There's not much money left... well.'

I've found the perfect thing for me.

"Do you have any items with poison fog or similar effects? Curses are good, too."

Something like a poison spray or something that could make you lose your sight. I could completely nullify the effects on myself, so I could use it most of the time.

After hearing my words, an employee brought over a black bead that had double protections placed on it.

"This is the Black Poison of S Class Hunter, Poison King Leon Louis Han. If you do not have an A Class or higher poison resistance skill or item, you will die within 10 seconds of inhalation depending on your current poison resistance rating; neutralization of the poison has to be done within 5 seconds. The effective radius is 5 meters and you will be immediately arrested and executed if this is used outside of Dungeons."

Poison resistance skills are known to be extremely rare and are A Class skills. There were no S Class poison resistance skills. Therefore, even someone with an A Level poison skill would be able to finish off all their opponents.

"Is there anything that affects a wider radius?"

Instead of 5 meters, if there was a melee monster 100 meters away, I would be able to break even a C Class Dungeon by my own with my items and skills. For Dungeons B Class and onwards, there are many monsters that could travel 100 meters in three seconds, so there was no way I could win there.

“Among the items currently being sold, this Black Poison Bead has the widest effective radius while still maintaining a good effect. That’s because the effect of poisonous fog gets lighter in proportion to the radius it is dispersed over. The further the opponent is from you, the longer they would take to die and therefore the rating of the poison is reduced. In the case of the Black Poison Bead, F Class monsters within a 50 meter radius can be killed within 10 seconds, and they would also be incapacitated within 3 seconds.”

50 meters in 3 seconds. I could clear an F Class Dungeon. The enemies would face a big loss.

“Most of the curses that randomly target foes are not very effective. Due to the nature of curses, there is a large difference between someone who randomly receives a curse and someone who signs a contract with a curse. There are also some kinds that can increase their effectiveness through sacrifices.”

“That’s enough.”

This was just for emergency usage. Where would I have the time to sit down and offer sacrifices?

Eventually I used the rest of the money to purchase three Black Poison Beads and then left the area. An employee opened the glass door and I took a step outside.

[F Class Hunter Han Yujin who has just registered his Awakening today. A Class Hunter Kim Sunghan is looking for you. Please visit and contact the Missing Child Protection Center immediately after hearing this broadcast.]

A broadcast sounded out, looking for me.

Fuck, that Kim Sunghan was looking for me through the fucking broadcast. And why was it the Missing Child Protection Center? He could have just asked me to go to the front door. With a curse, I quickly headed towards the Missing Child Protection Center before a second broadcast could come out.

Kim Sunghan was standing in front of the Missing Child Protection Center like a gangster who came to collect money. Parents who went there to look for their lost children would be scared to death.

“Where did you go?”

He said, furrowing his brow. Both his expression and his baritone voice was as fierce as a punch. If there had been no Fear Resistance to save me, I would not even be able to make a sound.

“I went to buy the contract. Did I not say that?”

“You did not.”

“I forgot. Sorry about that.”

My dry apology made Kim Sunghan’s face even more ominous. Hey, surely you wouldn’t swing that fist at me in anger, would you? I’m your Guild Leader’s brother. Please don’t forget that.

“Do you have any other business?”

What should I do? It’s a long way to Myeongdong Station but should I go there to look for Park Yerim? Or should I go home first? Yuhyun said that he’d move my things, but I still hadn’t packed them.

“Please go to my house. The address is—”

“There’s nothing there.”

Really?! I couldn’t move out without a landlord!

“Where have all my things been moved to? The Haeyeon Guild staff quarters?”

“It’s been moved to a spare room in the Guild Master’s living quarters.”

I refuse to live with my younger brother. I want to live independently and well, not in the hands of my younger brother, who wasn’t even my parent. Yuhyun-ah, let’s just carelessly burn down our relationship until it’s around half the relationship we had before my regression. Yeah?

“...then let’s go back to the guild. I have to organize my things.”

As I walked towards the elevator that was connected to the parking lot, the gazes of the people around me stuck to my face. The gossip backlash was coming.

“Is that the F Class guy who came here with the A Class?”

“What is the relationship between those two?”

“Kim Sunghan even tried to find him through a broadcast. There must be something.”

“Hadn’t they mentioned the Missing Child Protection Center earlier?” “At that age.”

That woman over there, don’t laugh! Were they collecting people who liked to talk dirty about others, or were they collecting Awakened people! That F Class F Class talk was stinging my ears.

‘Are you an S Class?’

As I had increased my mana, I peered at the people around me. As expected, there were F Classes everywhere. Even if there were C Classes, they would not be hanging around as they would be going straight to the guilds.

Named guilds accepted members that were C Class and above. From B Class onwards, you would get proper treatment wherever you went and people were anxious to bring in one more A Class.

‘He’s an F, he’s an F, you’re an F... huh?’

That man was just too much!

[Awakened – Yoo Myungwoo

Current Stat Class F

Awakening Available: Stats F

Optimization of Initial Skill

Master of the Golden Forge (SS) Failed to Obtain

Knife Grind (A) Failed to Obtain]

‘Master of the Golden Forge?!’

End

Chapter 9: < Old Friends Starting Today >

< Old Friends Starting Today >

That slightly stooped man who looked like he’s been worn down by the vicissitudes of life had an acquisition failed skill that was no less than SS-Rank!

It was obvious just from looking at the name that it was a special skill related to production. Wow, even 5 years later, not even one person came out with an equipment production skill. To think that I would see that here.

Special skills were already normally rare, and after the Awakening Centers were made, they completely disappeared[1]. This was because the Awakening Center’s Awakening method was to battle in a virtual reality. Later, virtual realities for healer use were made, but that was it.

This was why Awakened People from the Awakening Center had 70% combat skills, and 29% healing skills. The remaining 1% were also mostly combat-assistance skills, and special skills were about one in a million.

‘Anyways, awesome! Seriously awesome!’

If I raise that person, there was that issue of having to say that damned keyword, but it was too much of a waste to give up. First, thinking we should introduce ourselves to each other, I was going to go chase after the man going the opposite direction.

Tap.

The scruff of my neck grabbed. That guy Sunghan, treating me like some puppy[2], lightly picked me up and pulled me away, and said in a displeased voice.

“You’re trying to go somewhere again. Without saying anything.”

I had to report on this too? It felt like I was a 5-year-old who came out to buy groceries with his mom.

“It’s just... I thought I saw someone I know. I was going to go say hello.”

So let me go. Sunghan let me go, telling me that I should tell him beforehand, and while that was happening, the SS skill acquisition failed man got that much further away.

No, wait up.

“Hey! Myeongwoo!”

I yelled hard. Yoo Myeongwoo, who was about the turn around the corner, stopped and turned his head.

I put on an extremely pleased expression and walked over to him in big strides.

“You’re Myeongwoo, right? Yoo Myeongwoo. It’s been so long!”

As I made a fuss and pretended I knew him, Yoo Myeongwoo was taken aback and searched my face. Of course, even if he looked, he wouldn’t know me. This was our very first meeting.

“Um... who were you. I’m sorry, but I can’t remember well.....”

It's okay. I don't remember you either.

"You don't remember? Han Yoojin, Yoojin."

"...Sorry. I really don't remember."

"It's been too long, so it makes sense. I wasn't sure either. Have you been well all this time? Did you also Awaken?"

As I spoke, lightly hitting Yoo Myeongwoo's shoulder, he put on a bashful expression.

"Yeah. F-Rank, though."

"Stats and skills both?"

"My skills are E... but not enough to go into a dungeon. I just came to get the subsidy at least."

A weak smile flickered across Yoo Myeongwoo's face. Even just looking, it seemed like he was in tough circumstances.

"I'm FE too! But we still get Hunter licenses. It's a lot better than FF."

I whispered the last part. At my words, Yoo Myeongwoo showed a slightly brighter smile.

"Since you're FE, you must have requested a basics program?"

At my question, he shook his head.

“No. I didn’t. The training expenses are free but they said I had to pay boarding costs every week... The basics program doesn’t give out subsidies, and with my abilities, I don’t think I’ll be able to attack any dungeons, so I might as well use the time to job-hunt.”

I thought of me before the regression. If it weren’t for my debts, I might have also given up and run around the job front unremarkably. Since going and attacking a dungeon with only E-Rank buff skills was a really stupid thing to do.

So I..... sold the Haeyeon Guild Leader and got party members. It was definitely a scam, and my reputation definitely hit rock bottom. Back then, rather than helping out, I cursed out Yoohyun a lot, saying I would turn him away.

Let’s self-reflect. I shouldn’t do that again... but rather, even now I was still constantly lying. This is okay because it’s to help us get along!

“Still, it’s a waste. Do you want to get training with me at my guild?”

“Hm? Your guild-.”

“Han Yoojin-ssi.”

Kim Sunghan, who was silently standing a bit apart from us, cut in with a frown. Yoo Myeongwoo, who had only just noticed him, shrunk his neck like a frightened turtle.

“Only guild members can receive rookie Hunter training.”

“Ah[3], can’t you stick in just one little person[4]. And his personality is good. Kind and really good with his hands.”

You're like this because you don't know, but this guy was really awesome. He was a completely genuine person, but I couldn't explain.

"But-."

"Then I'll ask Yoohyun, and if he says no, I'll give up."

As soon as I took out my cell phone, Kim Sunghan was floored.

"He's busy!"

"If he doesn't pick up the phone, then later-."

[What is it? Did you finish the Awakened Person registration?]

Yoohyun picked up the phone after just two rings. It was fast.

"Yeah. I finished. I bought contracts too. But can you let my friend participate in Haeyeon Guild's rookie Hunter training?"

[Friend? Besides that, let him receive Hunter training?]

"Wouldn't receiving it be better? Just in case."

[Hmm. Okay. I'll send out word. You're coming right back, right?]

“Some guy completely shook down my house so where else would I go.”

Yoohyun laughed. Don’t laugh, you brat. If you broke even one cup, I’ll file for compensation... or rather, I’ve already gotten a billion won.

“It’s fine, right?”

I looked up at Kim Sunghan after hanging up the phone. His unhappy expression was obvious but he didn’t say anything and stepped back a couple of steps.

“Say, Haeyeon Guild’s Guild Leader, how do you...”

“He’s my dongsaeng.”

Yoo Myeongwoo’s eyes were full of awe and envy. Our Yoohyun is pretty impressive, huh, haha.

“If you complete the Guild, not Association, rookie training, it’s a lot easier to get party members. For F-Rank beginner dungeons, stats and skills are about the same so experience is the most important. What initial skills did you get?”

“Whetstone. It gives 2% more sharpness to weapons that have blades.”

“So it’s a weapon buff skill. It’s definitely vague. Still, you can endure up to D-Rank with equipment. Should I lend you one?”

If you plastered C-Rank equipment on yourself, F-Ranks could go around E-Rank dungeons. I was also F-Rank, but I’ve been to even D-Rank dungeons. Though I was nearly killed by the Lauchtas.

But it's hard to cover dungeons starting from C-Rank with just equipment.

"E-equipment...?"

Yoo Myeongwoo had an astonished expression. Well, for Hunter equipment, even F-Ranks went for hundreds of thousands of won. To depend on equipment, you had to wear one that was higher than your own rank, and then you could beat a dungeon as easy as breathing[5].

For example, I spent several hundred millions to buy equipment.

It was obvious that readily lending something like that was shocking. I put on my kindest smile with all my might.

"I can't go into dungeons often anyways. But isn't it a waste to leave it unused? I'm just lending you something that's idle so don't worry about it."

"But... I don't even remember you well....."

"You really don't have to worry! And you're a good guy. A really good guy."

He was a talent whose skill was so so good that it had two S's. If Yoo Myeongwoo's skills were discovered, then would a few equipment be a problem; if he waved a contract filled with all sorts of conditions, the whole world would come running.

"At least, I think you definitely have enough value to receive this kind of treatment, so just accept it. There's nothing bad about it, right?"

"R-Really..."

It looked like Yoo Myeongwoo's two eyes were squinting when,

Plop plop[6]

Large drops of tears[7] fell. Uh, oh[8]?

"Really, I... am someone with value?"

"T-that's right. I do think that."

"Uhheuheuk-![9]"

Yoo Myeongwoo started to cry as if a swelling dam had burst. He wailed as he made hitching noises.

W-what do I do? Should I comfort him?

"...A lot must have built up all this time."

As I clumsily patted his stooped back, he let out a sob and suddenly pulled me over to hug me.

Hey, hey. Calm down a little. It was really embarrassing.

With a plop, a paper cup fell from a vending machine. Then coffee filled the cup. I took out the coffee and looked at Yoo Myeongwoo who was sipping coix seed tea.

His face was wretched.

Of course, both his eyes were blood-shot, and not just his face but even his nape was red with heat. His appearance, caked with tear tracks, looked like that of a beggar who was completely beat up and chased out, but his expression looked a lot more refreshed.

“Have you calmed down a little now?”

Sitting on a bench next to the vending machine, he bashfully nodded his head. I took a sip of coffee as I sat down next to him on the bench. What use is there to be able to tell the difference between coffee bean varieties, vending machine coffee was the best.

“I won a lot of awards when I was young, remember?”

Yoo Myeongwoo opened his mouth, while looking at someone taking a walk behind the Association building. The weather was quite nice.

“Like you said, I was really good with my hands.”

“Yeah, I know. The best.”

If the talent was good enough to get a SS-Rank production skill, then it definitely was.

“But it’s useless for living. When I was young, people would say ‘you’re doing great’, but when my head got a little bigger, they’d say to stop playing around and study. And that I have to do well on tests, and go to a good college, and get a good job. There was no time for the talent I got praised for, and such.”

He continued in a calm voice.

“If my family’s circumstances were better off, I might’ve been able to find a path using my talent. But there was no breathing room. I didn’t have a talent for studying, and after going to a so-so college, I just had a lot of debt. College branded[10], grades branded. After that, I found I didn’t have anywhere to go.”

With his sigh, there was a bitter taste in my mouth.

I also knew it well, that. Even before Awakened People and Hunters appeared, the world also had ranks. They didn’t openly hand out S to F, but ranks were assigned as soon as you were born.

The so-called gold spoon and dirt spoon[11]. Just like Awakening stat ranks, you were different from the start.

Of course, there were people born into a poor family who made their own fortunes. But the majority stayed the same. Even if you tried, you wouldn’t be able to rise much and most had to stop.

‘Would initial skills be talents?’

If the circumstances don’t measure up, a talent doesn’t bloom in the end.

Like how everyone pushes you to study and divides you in ranks[12], the Awakening Center would also push you toward combat or healing and choose ranks. In the end, even SS-Rank skills like Yoo Myeongwoo’s in front of me would be buried and disappear.

As a Hunter, F-Rank, to society, F-Rank.

Ah, I want to crack open a bottle of soju[13]~.

“It’s been a long time since my parents divorced, and I’m a useless bum. Do you know how I Awakened? I was trying to kill myself.”

Yoo Myeongwoo giggled. It was more serious than I'd thought.

"I was cutting my wrist with a knife when I Awakened. Ah, I'll get a million won. With that thought, I felt relieved."

A million won. It wasn't a little, but it wasn't a lot either. It was an amount that would disappear through living expenses in a couple of months if you didn't have a decent job.

...I wonder what happened to the Yoo Myeongwoo before my regression. Only briefly happy after getting the million won, as an F-Rank with assistance skills that he couldn't go around a dungeon properly with, just how much longer would he have survived?

"With the million won, I can eat properly for once. And... after that I didn't really think of anything so I was just going to let things happen on its own. But you told me."

He said while crumpling the empty paper cup.

"That I have value. That I should continue living, that a path is set out for me, that I deserve a hand held out, that I have kind of value, so it's okay."

...With that, he might cry again. I uselessly cleared my throat. I was just trying to hit jackpot but now I was starting to feel ashamed.

"I don't act like that with just anyone. I was like that because you're really a great guy."

"Thanks. Really."

Yoo Myeongwoo rubbed away tears that were starting to form again with his fist. The atmosphere was quite good. If it wasn't now, another good opportunity might not appear.

Fine, let's do this.

"Our lives were sort of miserable. Mine wasn't smooth either. After my parents passed, trying to survive with my dongsaeng, I had to quit school. Still, my dongsaeng was lucky to Awaken as S-Rank, but I'm a lowly F-Rank. To tell you the truth, I was really jealous of my dongsaeng."

As I was talking, I unconsciously bared my heart.

"Still. Other people sneer at you saying that you ruined your life. We don't have to put ourselves down as well, right? It's hard enough to live when you have confidence, if you're timid then you get into trouble[14]."

If your mind becomes a mess because your life is a mess, you'll fall lower than rock bottom. Just by throwing out my inferiority complex, my life changed a lot.

"Is there any need to break our necks looking up? Just live thinking 'I'm actually amazing, others just don't recognize it'. And loving yourself. I love this amazing me!"

Rather than meaninglessly working hard for nothing[15], a mental victory is better. Smiling exaggeratedly, I looked at Yoo Myeongwoo.

"Yoo Myeongwoo, I love you too, my friend!"

That guy laughed and I laughed. A Messaged Window popped up.

[Awakened Person 'Yoo Myeongwoo' has been influenced by the keyword!]

[1] lit. 'as if the seed has dried up'

[2] 개새끼, 개 = dog, 새끼 = (lit.) offspring – but remember how it's also an insult? Yeah, 개새끼 also means something like 'son of a bitch'

[3] the actual sound is 'ey-ee' (or like the letter 'a') which is a sound you make when you're (often playfully) refuting something. There's no eng equivalent that I can think of, but the sound itself sounds like 'ey' which has a... different meaning in eng, so I just replaced it with something else

[4] the actual word means something like 'someone who isn't involved but keeps on inserting themselves' but that's a little awkward to put in so I just used a similar eng phrase 'one little person'. Ok I know they're not that similar but I did my best.

[5] lit. "several hundreds to more than a thousand [times] lightly"

[6] 'too-deuk' in krn

[7] lit. 'tears like chicken droppings'

[8] 'uh-ra' = a sound that's used in situations like 'what do we have here'/'oh?'/ 'huh?'

[9] crying noises

[10] in the old days, people who did something bad were branded somewhere obvious (I think on their face?) as punishment and to let other people know they are bad. He's referring to that.

[11] gold spoon refers to what is called 'silver spoon' in eng (as in 'born with a silver spoon in one's mouth') and you can guess what dirt spoon would mean, then

[12] in korea, at least up to my parents' gen, idk about now, schools would rank their students according to their grades (as in, the best student is 1, 2nd best is 2, etc.)

[13] Korean rice wine/alcohol, though nowadays it's also made with non-rice starches.

[14] lit. "roll in mud"

[15] lit. 'digging the ground'

Chapter 10: < Horned Flame Lion[1] (1) >

< Horned Flame Lion[1] (1) >

After exchanging cell phone numbers with future SS-Rank skill owner Yoo Myeongwoo, we parted ways. Getting him accepted as a member of Haeyeon Guild was a problem, so should I insist to Yoohyun that I could feel something great from Yoo Myeonwoo.

When I returned to Haeyeon Guild, a rumor or something must have spread because people were sending gazes filled with curiosity my way.

“That person is Guild Leader’s hyung?”

“This is my first time seeing him! But they don’t really look similar.”

“Excuse me, Guild Leader’s hyung! Are you really F-Rank?”

They sure had a lot to say. Looking around, more than half had come out to look at me, but it was the weekend so why don’t you all go home and rest.

“Yes, I’m F-Rank, please get out of my way.”

Go away, you people. Besides people on duty, all of you go home.

But, maybe because I didn’t make much trouble in this point in time, there weren’t any gazes filled with killing or cursing intent.

When I started being called trash in earnest was half a year later, after Awakening Centers appeared and I Awakened.

As soon as it was announced that Awakening Centers had opened, several people had come looking for me. They had greatly anticipated me, who had an S-Rank Awakened dongsaeng, and coaxed me, and carrying their support, I had boldly gone to the first day of the Awakening Centers’ opening and Awakened.

And then, well, the result was F-Rank, obviously.

At that time, there had been a lot of journalists there, and there had been tabloids like 'S-Rank's brother is also S-Rank?!'..... After that... I had been severely criticized, attacked to death, the guys who supported me had defied the contracts and I had amassed a lot of debt.....

Setting aside debt, thinking about the criticism even now made me feel wronged. Did I ask for the articles to be written, they're the ones who had made a fuss on their own, so why criticize me. Don't attack me, attack the trash journalists, shit.

Thinking of the past events or future events made me feel like crying so I walked faster. I felt dejected, fuck. Even if I didn't do anything else, I was going to take revenge on those trash journalists. If it weren't for those events, my life would have been about half as less ruined.

Especially, Kim Seungjoon, Bak Haeshin. Two bastards I would never be able to forget. They took my interviews and distorted my words, just wait you aggro-pulling bastards.

Grinding my teeth, I went up the elevator. You had to get checked at the 10th floor and go to the portal room and once again get your identity checked, before you could go through the portal into Yoohyun's house. It was annoying to I'll move to the employee lodgings.

'So just where is my room.'

Yesterday, I was moved by the huge TV, and fell asleep watching soccer[2] on the sofa that was comfier than a bed. The soccer was so fun.

Maybe because athletes had good physical conditions, there were a lot who Awakened as E-Rank or higher. In the end, they retired one by one, and now just so-so athletes remained, whether it was soccer or basketball or baseball. Stats E-Rank and higher weren't regular people, so they couldn't play in matches.

But, C-Rank and lower Awakened People League was going to be formed soon. C-Ranks and lower didn't make as much as pro athletes so there were complaints.

‘Just how many rooms are in Yoohyun’s house?’

Since it took up half a floor, it must be seriously large. I opened one of the closest doors. It was completely empty inside.

“Since he’s living alone, most of the rooms should be empty. What a waste of space.”

Grumbling, I walked along the hallway. It was my first time going this way... oh.

There was a garden in a room surrounded by glass walls. Or, rather than a garden, was it closer to a greenhouse? It was densely packed with trees, and flowers were growing all over the place-.

-Kyaang!

“Ack[3], what was that!”

I was following along the glass walls when something like a cat burst out from between the bushes. A cat with red fur and a tail like a fox’s and a single horn on its head barked[4] threateningly at me. This glass wall was strong, right?

“This tiny thing is fierce.”

Was this a pen instead of a greenhouse. It didn’t look like a regular animal, so I wondered what it was.

Thinking ‘just maybe’, I used Seed-Leaf on the cat.

[2nd Rank Unicorn[5] subspecies – Horned Flame Lion(Corporeal)

Current stat rank C

Growth possible stat rank A~S

Optimized Initial Skills

Flame Breath[6](S) Achieve after growth

Blaze Run(A) Achieve after growth

Giant Fire[7](A) Achieve after growth

Flame Resistance(A) Acquired

✕No growth without an adult[8]’s help]

“...You’re saying this cat is a Horned Flame Lion?”

I couldn’t hide my surprise and looked at the barking cat.

2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies Horned Flame Lion. As a 2nd Rank, the rank was high, and even though it wasn’t as good as a dragon-type, it was a high-ranking magic-beast[9]-type. With high stats and a fast pace, it was a beast whose skills were strong in destructive power, so if you didn’t prepare specifically for it, even if you were an S-Rank, it was hard to deal with alone.

For Yoohyun, since he had fire-attribute immunity, it would probably be easy, though.

‘Did he catch it to tame it? Did Awakened People with tamer skills already appear?’

If taming was possible, it would probably be a familiar[10] exactly suited for Yoohyun. Growth had to be possible, too. It was a loss since it was impossible for growth without an adult’s help.

.....Would the ‘My Brat’ skill possibly work on monsters too? It didn’t say that it was only for people.

Should I try once...

[Target’s keyword influence is incomplete.]

The same message as when I tried it on Kim Sunghan appeared. There was nothing about the skill application being impossible. So monsters can be targets too!

[My Brat is the Best(L) skill applied to 2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies – time required for the Horned Flame Lion to become an adult[11]: 15 days]

Continuing, a Message Window came up. That meant it was possible to apply once per month for 3 days[12], so that in 5 months it could become an adult.

‘Even after 5 years, Yoohyun definitely didn’t have a familiar.’

The higher ranking the dungeon, the larger the inside became, so it would be convenient with a familiar. But Yoohyun couldn’t get a familiar without A-Rank or higher flame resistance because of the skill characteristic. If he got attacked while travelling, a situation like the innocent familiar being captured might happen while he’s using his attack skills.

‘So it seems like he caught a baby Horned Lion but failed in growing it.’

Tamer skills could only tame monsters that were lower level than the skill rank. Horned Flame Lions were at the level of S-Ranks, so if it wasn’t a baby it wouldn’t be able to be tamed. But since the baby was C-Rank, even a B-Rank tamer could tame it.

Though, it probably wouldn’t grow.

‘You probably can’t use something this size for a familiar. It’d be perfect if I grow it.’

Familiars were so precious, even regular magic creatures[13] were treated as a S-Rank items, so it was a waste to just leave this extremely suitable magic beast. As a unicorn subspecies, its pace was faster than a magic-beast-type, and it also had attack power. It really was the highest grade.

But the keyword was a problem. Would this guy even understand human speech?

“Hey, kiddo. Can you understand human speech?”

-Keuang! Kyang!

“So it doesn’t.”

-Keureureu

Still, giving up was too much of a waste. Was there a way to train it? In things like an animal farm, there were many that understood human speech.

‘I don’t really know if they have to understand the keyword, or simply hear it and feel emotional.’

The keyword itself could be fluid. In the case of my past keyword, besides 'do your best', using 'please do your best', 'let's do our best', etc. also worked. So, I thought that it worked as long as the meaning was conveyed; if understanding was needed, like my assumption, then it would be difficult.

How would I even teach a Horned Flame Lion what love is.

'Either way, I'll try experimenting with this guy.'

Like Pavlov's dog, if I told it I love it every time I gave it something to eat, there'd be a response. If I taught it 'I love you' = 'food' and then starved it for a few days, then when I tell it I love it then-.

Bam[14]!

Just then, I heard the door being opened as if it was breaking. A different person wouldn't be acting like that in the Guild Leader's house, so maybe it was Yoohyun?

Good timing. I should tell him I was going to try raising the baby Horned Flame Lion.

"Yoo...hyun?"

I was going to call my dongsaeng over to the hallway when I saw his grave expression. Both the set of his eyes and mouth were stiff, as if he was angry. I wonder what happened?

"What's wrong? Did something-."

"Hand it over."

My dongsaeng growled as he strode over. Wh-what? Maybe he meant the gift card? Well, the amount of money was too much anyways. ...I used up most of it, what should I do. Would a refund work?

“Black Poison Fog Circle.”

“...Huh?”

“Hand it over right now.”

It wasn't the gift card? But how did he know I bought Black Poison Fog Circles? The Hunter shopping mall should be confidential. Did gift cards also send payment texts?

“That, why-.”

“Give it.”

The demanding voice became harsher. A dark red light was enveloping his two eyes. It was thanks to the Fear Resistance that I wasn't afraid, but why was this guy acting like this.

“Seriously what-.”

“Hyung.”

Just let me talk. He kept on cutting me off.

It seemed like he would grab me by the collar if I held out, so I reluctantly took out one Black Poison Fog Circle from my inventory. I was going to solo an F-Rank dungeon with this. Did I have to give him all of

them?

“The other ones too.”

Only after I handed over the remaining two did Yoohyun’s expression relax. That guy threw the Black Poison Fog Circles in his inventory, and then gave a long sigh.

“Just why did you think that.”

“.....Huh?”

What was he talking about.

“Am I so untrustworthy?”

It seemed like my dongsaeng was talking nonsense. Was he already sick[15]? This guy with a strong Flame Resistance.

“I don’t know what you mean, but if we’re talking about being untrustworthy, then isn’t that more me? You’re a trustable sort.”

So reliable that if he made a guarantee, you could take out 100 billion won. Of course, even if we were brothers we shouldn’t make guarantees.[16]

At my words, Yoohyun’s face became very twisted. I said you were trustworthy so why were you like that again? It would be great if I had a skill to read my dongsaeng’s mind.

“Don’t say stuff like that. Hyung, you... have even resolved to give your life for me.”

.....Excuse me? Not the other way around? You died and it was thanks to that that I lived and regressed, though.

“Um... I don’t really know what you’re talking about but I just-.”

“If you ever get held hostage, don’t even think about doing something like taking poison. Whatever happens, I’ll save you, so don’t ever think about dying.”

“Uh, uh?”

Poison? That’s what you meant!

Well, this guy didn’t know I had Poison Resistance.

Black Poison Fog Circle was a widespread poison fog. Without Poison Resistance, it was a ‘I’m taking you down with me’ sort of situation... The misunderstanding made sense.

I smiled ashamedly.

“Hey, I don’t have that kind of thought. Why would I die?”

“Hyung.....”

He abruptly pulled me into his arms. No, don’t. It was a misunderstanding!

"Thanks."

"No, that's..."

"But it's the thought that counts; don't worry about me, worry about yourself."

...I never worried about you though.

Yoohyun acting like this made it embarrassing to tell the truth so I just vaguely nodded my head. And it was hard to explain why I had a high Poison Resistance skill that could withstand Black Poison Fog Circles. L-Rank Poison Resistance suddenly appeared like ta-da~! That's definitely suspicious.

"But, Yoohyun. Over there, there's a red cat-like thing."

I asked, pulling out of my dongsaeng's embrace. At my words, Yoohyun looked towards the greenhouse.

"It's a baby Horned Flame Lion."

"Horned Flame Lion?"

"Yeah. It's your first time hearing about it, right? It first came out of an S-Rank dungeon we[17] attacked 2 months ago. There was a baby so I brought it out to use it as a familiar but... even after 2 months, it hasn't grown at all."

Of course it wouldn't grow. It was a magic beast that couldn't grow without an adult's help.

"The tamer said that they think it can only grow under special conditions. There's no way to know what the conditions are, and like this it's useless, so I'm planning on getting rid of it."

“Get rid of it? Are you going to put it up for auction?”

“No. I have to kill it. In the rare chance that someone else can grow it, I can’t let that happen. It’ll be tough if the 3 big guilds in particular get their hands on it.”

They were cold-hearted words. Even if it was a monster, if you raised it for 2 months, wouldn’t you feel some affection for it? It looked pretty cute too.

“It’s a waste so can’t I raise it instead? Even if it’s a baby, isn’t it still stronger than me? I could probably use it in an emergency.”

“It’ll be too hard for you to raise. The price of its feed is expensive.”

“How much is it?”

“One meal is one C-Rank magic stone.”

.....10 million won? That’s crazy?

[1] lit. ‘flame horn-lion’ but if I write it as ‘Flame Horned Lion’, it might seem like the horn has flames, rather than describing the entire lion, so I switched the ordering. I guess I could have left it at the original tl, but I think this version sounds better.

[2] or football, whatever floats ur boat, but I’m from the u.s. so...

[3] actually ‘huk’, noise of disbelief/surprise

[4] lit. “went kyak kyak”. Krn uses a lot of onomatopoeias (also for non-animal sounds). I know cats meow, but this is clearly not a meow, and anyways foxes (re: the tail) bark...

[5] this is the eng word transliterated into krn

[6] I think it's 'breath'. It's a transliterated word (pronounced beu-reh-seu, there is no th sound in krn).

[7] 거대화: depending on what 화 means, it could also mean “to make bigger” (then I guess the skill would be something like ‘Gigantize’), but all of these were fire skills so I thought 화=fire made more sense

[8] 성체: this is usually used for adult animals, but technically, it can mean ‘grown/adult lifeform’ because 성=adult, 체=body

[9] 마수: not entirely sure what this is supposed to be. It usually means evil trick (it isn't the word for magic, which is 마술 or 마법) bc the hanja (chn characters) for that is 마(魔) = evil, demon, monster & 수(手) = hand (and extrapolating from that, ‘influence’). However, given the context of this entire chapter, it might be that the 2nd character is 수(獸) = beast. 마(魔) is a character present in most magic-related words, so I'm assuming it can also mean ‘magic’ in made-up words. In which case, 마수 = magic beast. It's either that, or it's ‘demon beast’ since 마(魔) means demon. But I thought magic beast sounded better/more suitable? Idk though.

[10] 기승수: idk what this is bc it's also another made-up/nonstandard word. From the context, I've assumed that it means something like ‘familiar’ as in ‘witch's familiar’. Then I reverse-engineered the hanja to see if any (there are several hanja that are pronounced like each syllable) would fit and lo and behold, 기(氣) = spirit (a.k.a. ki/qi), 수(獸) = beast. 승 is

probably either win (勝, it's most common meaning in krn; 기승 actually means 'unyielding spirit') or connect (承, which makes more sense, if 기승수 really does mean familiar). A spirit connecting beast, a familiar – makes sense, no? Anyways, the reason I keep on mentioning hanja is bc for names/fantasy words, usually hanja is used, the way eng speakers use latin/greek to make new fancy words.

[11] 화염 뿔사자의 성체 탈태 소요시간: 화염 뿔사자 = HFL, 의 = 's (indicating possession), 성체 = adult, 탈태 = change of state, 소요시간 = time required, so lit. 'time required for HFL's adult change of state'. This confused me a little bc I couldn't figure out what 탈태 meant and it seems to be a really uncommon word, but it's possibly made from 탈출(escape) and 변태(metamorphosis).

[12] remember, this skill can only be used for 3 days, and has a waiting period of 30 days

[13] 마수마: see [8] for 마수(魔手). The last 마 might be the same 마(魔) = evil/demon/monster, thus, it probably means something like 'a monster that uses 마수/magic/demonic influence'. I used 'creature' instead of 'monster' because the author also uses the eng word 'monster' transliterated into krn, and that's the word I've been using as 'monster'; I've also been using 'beast' for other words that also mean 'monster'. I think the difference between 마수마 & 마수/magic beast is that 마수마 is not necessarily animal-like.

[14] lit. 'kwang'

[15] lit. “eat heat” = become weak/sick, which is why YJ mentions YH’s flame resistance in the next sentence.

[16] ‘making a (financial) guarantee’ = (idk if this is just in korea bc idk anything abt banks) when you go to the bank to borrow money, someone has to vouch for you (give a guarantee) so that if you can’t pay the bank back, the guarantee-er has to pay for you. This causes a lot of (social) problems so there’s a saying in korea that you should never make a guarantee.

[17] actually there was no pronoun so idk who did the attacking, but saying ‘dungeon that was attacked’ didn’t seem like it conveyed the same meaning.

Chapter 11: < Horned Flame Lion (2) >

< Horned Flame Lion (2) >

“It eats magic stones? That kitty?”

“Specifically, it eats grounded magic stones mixed with meat. It wouldn’t eat just raw meat.”

The kitty’s mouth is super high-class. If it eats one magic stone per day, one month was 300 million and 1 year was 3.66 billion won.

Since he said 1 meal, if it ate 3 meals per day, the amount in one year was over 10 billion.

“.....Could you lend me the feed price?”

No matter how fast, I had to raise it for half a year for it to become an adult, but of course, I didn't have money like several billions of won. When it becomes an adult, it'd be a familiar that wouldn't be able to live off even several hundreds of billions, instead of several billions. Make an investment for me.

At my words, Yoohyun laughed.

"Okay. Don't worry, it's not really an amount of money that will burden me."

You're saying one meal of 10 million won wasn't a burden. I'm jealous, S-Rank Awakened Person.

Even after getting 5 L-Rank skills, all were assistance so it wasn't possible to go around a diamond mine S-Rank dungeon. Shouldn't something like 'Dragon Slayer' give attack-type, defense-type skills paired together. Something like 'Dragon Breath', or 'Dragon Scale'.

Maybe I have rotten luck.

"For tamed monsters, as long as you have their owner's token, anyone can handle them. But if their owner is changed, they get confused and even disobey so you have to be careful. Especially if their owner has a lower rank, the possibility of that is higher."

Yoohyun said, as he pulled out a pendant with flat blue stoned embedded on it out of his inventory.

Now to think of it, I wondered what my actual rank was. My stats were F-Rank, but my skills were mostly L-Rank, so it might be higher than S-Rank.

But even if I was S-Rank in terms of the system[1], if you couldn't go into an S-Rank dungeon, the real rank would be A or lower. Saint Emily Spence was like that.

Then, my real rank would probably be around A-Rank, too.

After taking the pendant, the owner's token, I went back to the greenhouse. The Horned Flame Lion was still stuck to the glass wall, and was going kyareureu as if it was angry.

"Hey, kiddo. Your owner has changed."

I went toward the glass wall, shaking and showing the pendant. The Horned Flame Lion tilted its head and looked back and forth between me and Yoohyun.

-Keuheung

Oh, it became calm. It wasn't to the extent of intimacy, but it completely stopped barking and pouncing.

"Even if it's small, a monster is a monster, so don't go in by yourself for now. It'll take about a week for it to completely recognize its owner."

Yoohyun said as he unlocked the greenhouse door. To contain a C-Rank monster, they probably weren't normal glass walls.

"There aren't other monsters than the Horned Lion in the greenhouse, right?"

"I put in some flora and fauna from the dungeon's ecosystem, but there aren't any monster-class. No, there's one."

"What is it?"

"5th rank magic-tree-type[2] Guillotine[3]. Even as a 5th rank, there are only a few, but its fruit is useful, so I planted some."

...Isn't that the man-eating tree that grabs people with its tentacles and melts them to eat. Man-eating-tree-types were on the weak side, but if it was 5th rank, it was on higher side of D-Ranks. It'd be hard for F-Rank Level 1 me to deal with, even with A-Rank equipment.

"They're already pruned, so don't worry. As long as you periodically cut them, it's safe."

Yoohyun opened the greenhouse door as he told me not to worry. Hot air pushed out from the interior. Maybe because of the Horned Flame Lion, it seemed like the temperature was set high.

"Now that I think of it, isn't taking flora and fauna out of dungeons illegal?"

"There's no law related to that yet. Domestic dungeons are handled through domestic territories so they weren't smuggled either. They just told me to be careful about not spreading them into the wild since there's a danger of disturbing the ecosystem."

So it was before the law was established. When was it banned... was it because of the Shinho Group's Snow Flower[4] Butterfly incident?

I put on the slippers for greenhouse use and went inside. Among the mostly unfamiliar plants, there were a few trees and grasses that were familiar. That was a vine that was often found in E-Rank dungeons.

Rustle[5]

Along with the sounds of pushing through the grass, the baby Horned Flame Lion appeared. Now that it stopped leaping around and became docile, it was really cute. Its size was about that of a grown cat, but the shape of its face retained the roundness characteristic of baby animals. Its big golden eyes were pretty like gems.

“Does it have a name?”

“No.”

You didn’t even name it. Heartless guy.

With about half its body hidden under a wide leaf, the Horned Lion searched our gazes. It looked like it was confused by its owner suddenly being replaced.

“You’re a good boy[6] aren’t you, kiddo?”

I squatted down and lowered my eye level as I called to the Horned Lion.

“Come here, jjong jjong[7].”

I’ll raise you well. The Horned Lion hesitated before coming to right in front of me. It was just then.

[Title ‘Perfect Caregiver’ has increased the effect of item ‘Owner’s Token’

The tamed target shows goodwill toward the Caregiver.]

A sudden Message Window popped up. What, there’s an effect like this?

-Kkeeang

The Horned Lion slightly opened its mouth and cried adorably[8]. Ack, so cute. And after rubbing its cheek on my hand, it flopped down.

Ahh, what is this cutie pie! It waved its chubby feet that looked like they were wearing golden socks, and purred[9]. The thick tail wagged back and forth. Its fur was soft.

It's warm, cute, that's crazy[10], cute!

"How could you think of killing such a cute guy."

I said, petting the baby Horned Lion attached to my arm. A tiny thing like this already knows how to hide its claws. Alright, alright, I'll hold you. Oojjoojjoo.[11]

"It didn't act particularly cute for me."

"Even though you fed it for two months?"

"Yeah. It did act well-behaved since it was tamed, but it didn't wag its tail or stick to me."

It seemed like the Perfect Caregiver's effect was stronger than I'd thought. was it because it's a baby? If I succeed in growing the Horned Lion, I could collaborate with a tamer and pick out high rank familiars.

If I raise one or two per year, how much[12] would that be. The whole world would come looking for me.

"I'll put myself in your care[13], kiddo."

As I imagined a pleasant future, the Horned Flame Lion I was holding seemed more and more cuter.

‘If I succeed in applying the skill, in about two months, I could say that I gained something like a monster caregiving skill.’

If I said that I got the skill while taking care of the baby monster, it’s natural, and around then I’d have about three to four A~S-Ranks protecting me. Or I could grow a lot of baby monsters and keep them with me.

Would my nickname be something like Magic Beast Tamer[14]? It sounded a little cool, hm hm.

“Can I take him outside?”

“Not outside the guild building. It’s still illegal to go around with tamed monsters unless you’re attacking a dungeon. And even inside the building, don’t take it around to floors 1~3 where Unawakened people go in and out of.”

In 5 years, people make appearances on broadcasts with cool-looking magic beasts that you can barely call a pet. About when did the law change, again?

Holding the Horned Flame Lion, I left the greenhouse. Yoohyun said to leave it for one more day just in case but I ignored him.

My rank should at least be S, and I even have the effect of an L-Rank skill, so what problems would there be. It’d probably keep on docilely following me.

I wondered what I should name it.

“But hyung. You shouldn’t easily accept and drink things like orange juice.”

“.....What?”

Orange juice? Suddenly what orange..... Hunter shopping mall.

I looked at my dongsaeng with bitter eyes. Leaving aside Black Poison Fog Circles, he even knew what I drank.

“Did you plant a spy in the Hunter shopping mall or something.”

“Yeah.”

A nonchalant answer came back.

“What? Really?”

“On the 6th floor, even other guilds must have put in one or two. Since B-Rank Hunters and higher are the main customers. If you know what they’re buying then it helps you grasp what their goals and schedules are.”

.....So the influence war between guilds was a lot more intense than I had thought. I mean, even so, saying that you have to be careful in a public institution like the Hunter Association. Wasn’t that too much?

“So you can’t be relaxed just because it’s the Hunter Association. It’s getting more and more dangerous to eat things others give you, and don’t go around by yourself again. It’s also better not to go to any outside restaurants near the Association. Ah, vending machine drinks are okay.”

“But, not even anywhere else, but inside the Association, would they do that sort of thing? If they get caught the backlash will be big.”

And if Awakened People can’t trust in the Association anymore, then the guilds would suffer damage too.

“Of course, inside the Association, trouble probably wouldn’t occur. But sending their targets away in an ambulance or police car is possible.”

“...Do those ambulances and police cars go missing?”

“So, you get it.”

Yoohyun smiled. Is it time to be smiling.[15]

Somehow, as time went by, I felt like I should stop being involved with Yoohyun and go off to live on my own. Though if I don’t give up on the Perfect Caregiver name, I’ll be involved with A, S-Ranks so in the end, I’ll still get interference.

If I think like that, might as well get my trustable brother to have my back.

“The Hunter world is difficult too, huh.”

“It’s relatively peaceful for lower than C-Rank.”

No, it’s not always like that, ok? Rock bottom was its own battle. There’s a difference between sending out spies and gracefully working in secret, and openly throwing out punches.

“If there’s anything else I need to be careful of, tell me in the morning.”

“You just have to look out for basic things. Don’t take things from people you don’t know, don’t go to places that are dark and don’t have people, even if an elderly person asks for help don’t follow them.”

“Ah, yes. I will come home before 9 o’clock, and send you the number when I ride taxis, and if it seems as if I will be late, I will diligently call you. Should I get a lost child prevention necklace[16] too?”

“I’d rather a tracker.”

...I couldn’t even joke. People of the world, please get along with each other. That way, I’ll be comfortable.

I looked down at the Horned Flame Lion purring in my arms.

“Your name from now on is Peace[17].”

The world was definitely love and peace[18].

[1] system is transliterated from the eng word, idk if that’s significant. It probably means the game-like Awakening mechanics.

[2] 마수목종: 마수 = (see last ch.’s footnotes), 목 = tree, 종 = species/type

[3] 길로티네, pronounced ‘gill-lo-tee-neh’ with a hard g.

[4] 눈꽃 lit. means “snow flower” but it’s a word used to express snow that has landed on trees & such, making it seem like flower have bloomed. In other words, it’s kinda like ‘dew’ except with snow instead of rain/mist/atmospheric water.

[5] 바스락 (pronounced ba-seu-rahk): onomatopoeia-ish word referring to rustling, crunching (like when you step on fallen leaves), muffled/indistinct sounds

[6] lit. “[You are] kind/good-natured [aren’t you?], kiddo.” where the stuff in the [] are implied by the context or grammatical structure. There’s no gender or any sort of noun involved with the adjective (except for the ‘kiddo’ at the end), but the adj is often used when speaking of children or toward little children, the way eng speakers say “good boy” or “good girl”.

[7] nonsense sound words that are like clicking your tongue.

[8] 애교 (aegyo): it’s specifically an extremely childishly cute/charming way of acting

[9] ‘went kyareureung (가르릉)’ which isn’t exactly purring, more like just sounds that baby animals make, but it’s similar

[10] this is just an exclamation-like phrase

[11] these are nonsense cooing noises that people/parents make at babies

[12] it’s a word often used with money, so that’s what he means here.

[13] lit. “from now on, [I] request well” which is a standard (polite) phrase you give to someone who you will be spending a lot of time with, living with, depending on their assistance with, etc. It’s also like “please take care of me from now on”.

[14] 마수사: 마수 = magic beast (as established before), -사 = someone with an expertise. So, not technically “tamer” but I thought that would fit best.

[15] lit. “does a smile come out” but the tl I gave is the general meaning of the phrase.

[16] this is a necklace with a tag that has a child’s name and address and parents’ contact information. Also, YJ and YH talk to each other informally, but YJ used polite speech here for sarcasm except for the last sentence. I tried to get that through in the tl by not using contractions and using ‘9 o’clock’ instead of just ‘9’ but idk if I succeeded...

[17] this isn’t the krn word for ‘peace’; it’s the eng word transliterated into krn

[18] ‘love and peace’ is transliterated from eng.

Chapter 12: < Second S-Rank (1) >

< Second S-Rank (1) >

The weather was a little hotter than yesterday. I was searching around Myeongdong Station, holding a Hard Bar[1] in my mouth.

A steakhouse near Myeongdong Station.

It was because besides this, there was no information about Ice Witch Bak Yerim’s current residence.

“Sorry to bother you. Does a student named Bak Yerim live here by any chance?”

“No, there’s no one like that.”

This time was no good too. I put an X on the map on my cell phone. I checked this whole street, should I go over to that side. There were actually a lot of steakhouses.

Biting off the little remaining Hard Bar, I was glancing around, when I saw Kim Sunghan, who was following me a bit apart and dressed like he was dying from heat. I wanted to make that person into an S-Rank but it was inconceivable.

The situation with Yoo Myeongwoo was good luck. But what kind of excuse would there be to tell that person I love him. Should I prepare a drinking party?

‘Should I insist that giving love confessions to anyone is how I act when I’m drunk.’

Of course, simply saying the keyword didn’t work, and you needed to feel something, so becoming friendly was the priority. How would we get close? Maybe alcohol after all. Did he like alcohol?

I crossed the street and went towards **[2] Barbecue Rib House located in a secluded place. My mouth watered from thinking about drinking and smelling meat roasting. Looking at the menu on the wall, it seemed like they also did tripe and entrails.

Tripe was good. Tripe, sizzling with fat and puffed like cotton wool, and refreshing beer that clears your palate[3]! Grilled pork belly and soju was also good, but it was definitely tripe for me.

Tripe was good. I wanted to eat tripe. It was still early but still time to eat dinner, so should I eat and then look.

Holding the ice cream stick in my mouth, I was going over to the rib house door when,

“So everything is all my fault!”

With the shrill cry, the glass door slammed open. The small bell hanging on the door shook like it was going to break.

“It’s all that bastard Bak Soochun!!”

“Where does that girl think she is that she’s yelling like that?! Come back here![4]”

A young girl wearing a tracksuit kicked the door and glared inside the shop. The face filled with anger was definitely familiar. It was Bak Yerim, right?

“Excu-. [5]”

“Why don’t you all die! [6]”

After sudden yelling, Bak Yerim turned around and started to run away. Where are you going, just wait!

I ran after the girl who had gone far in an instant. The other person was a middle school girl and I might be an F-Rank, but I was an Awakened adult, so I would quickly catch... why was she so fast?

‘Did she already Awaken? Ack, a car!’

While I was hesitating, stopped by the car, the shortened distance grew farther again. Should I have worn the gloves and belt? If I hadn’t taken them off because it was hot, I would’ve been able to catch her right away. But I definitely saw which direction she was going in.

After the car passed, I crossed the street and ran towards where Bak Yerim went.

In a short distance, there was a hill overgrown with trees. I saw the back of the girl who was sitting haphazardly on the ground between trees at the edge of Namsan Mountain[7].

‘First, let me check.’

Since it could be a different person. It was quite a long distance to use the Seed-Leaf skill but a Status Window popped up.

[Unawakened Person – Bak Yerim

Possible Awakening stat rank A~S

Optimized Initial Skills

Shadowless Day(SS)

Hermes’ Sandals[8](S)

White Corpse(S)]

I did expect the best possible Awakening stat rank to be S. The optimized initial skills having an SS was a little surprising. But more than anything.

‘There’s nothing similar to ice?!’

The optimized initial skills of the girl who was famous as an ice witch were all things I haven’t heard of before. This truth was so surprising that I was shocked.

So she had become that famous with skills that didn't even suit her? Just how overwhelmingly talented was she. I was jealous.

'But these skills... I really can't tell what types they are.'

At any rate, Hermes' Sandals was probably flight or agility related, but I couldn't guess the characteristics of Shadowless Day and White Corpse.

It was regretful that the Seed-Leaf skill couldn't check the details too.

It wouldn't do if they were assistance skills. Still, the stats were S-Rank, so-.

"Han Yoojin-ssi."

Oh shit, that startled me! Sunghan abruptly appeared next to me. His expression asked me what I thought I was doing.

"I felt a strong strength from that student so I'm thinking of approaching her. Please wait here."

Saying that I felt a strong strength made me feel like I've become a cultist. He glanced at Bak Yerim and then silently nodded his head.

Okay, now, how should I approach. Thinking hard, I slowly went towards Bak Yerim.

The still very young girl was sitting with her back facing me so I couldn't check her expression. But that back seemed to contain a sadness. The hunched thin shoulders were sorrowful.

“Excuse me, student[9]. Can we talk for a bit?”

I spoke as kindly as possible. I am a harmless person. Trust me.

Bak Yerim turned her head and looked at me. She wasn't crying but the rims of her eyes were red. There were traces of her worrying her bottom lip.

“Hello? I'm-.”

“I'm not interested in sex[10].”

“I'm not either!”

What do you see me as!

The atmosphere that was like a thin sheet of ice was crushed[11]. Why would statutory rape come up here!

“You're Bak Yerim, right?”

At my words, she slowly stood up. And sent me a suspicious glance.

“...Stalker?”

“I'm not!”

‘Statutory rape’ wasn't enough so you're even bringing up ‘stalker’! I felt wronged. Even before my

regression I was clean in this respect. Though I wasn't in others.

"I'm, anyways, I'm someone who was once indebted to your parents."

I decided to use the 'you don't know but we actually have a connection' again. The kid's guard was up too high for me to say I came to scout her.

"To my parents?"

"That's right. I'm not a suspicious person."

"You're a really suspicious looking ahjussi[12] though."

Ahjussi! F-fine. My age might seem like that of an ahjussi to a middle schooler. My age is already thirty...no it isn't! I regressed! I'm still in my twenties!

"...I'm still in my mid-twenties, okay?"

"Have you gone to the army[13] yet?"

"...Yeah."

"Then you are an ahjussi."

.....I was already depressed about going to the army because I didn't Awaken, but this was too much. Thinking about trusting my protection to her already made my stomach sting. Her character was no joke, from a young age.

“Anyways, I want to support you.”

“So it really is statutory rape! Police!”

“No! It’s not! Here, my Hunter license and Guild membership card!”

I quickly took out my wallet and showed my license and membership card. Looking at them, Bak Yerim raised her eyebrows.

“What, you’re an F-Rank. Rather than support, it looks like your own life will be too much to handle.”

.....So she’s a brat who only chooses to say agonizing things.

“Can you look at the guild membership card too.”

“Haeyeon Guild? But that’s famous.”

“That’s right, you know Haeyeon Guild’s Guild Leader Han Yoohyun, right? S-Rank Hunter. He’s my dongsaeng.”

Bak Yerim looked me over again with a surprised expression.

“That good-looking oppa[14]? You don’t really look alike.”

“...That guy is an oppa.”

“He didn’t go to the army.”

“S-Ranks are exempted anyways.”

“Then correction to abilities-having oppa.”

.....It hurt more because she was right. Still, maybe she felt a little sorry because she chatted, saying that she could see a resemblance when she looked closer.

“Having a dongsaeng with abilities is an ability, too. Don’t put on that pitiful expression, ahjussi.”

“When did I.”

“It’s a face of a victim who suffered for 5 years, though.”

What. Did she have the ability to read memories or something.

“Let’s stop getting off track, I can make you into an Awakened Person.”

“An Awakened Person?”

Bak Yerim had an interested gleam in her eyes. Being an Awakened Person was the hottest[15] job so it was popular even among kids. Of course, only C-Rank and higher. All jobs were like that; let’s just pretend the bottom doesn’t exist.

“Yeah. That’s my skill. Making others into Awakened People. And I have the Guild Leader behind my back, so it’s possible to help get you a place there.”

“But that’s no help if I turn out to be F.”

“Don’t worry. Your rank is at least B-Rank or higher.”

At my confident words, she cocked her head.

“You can tell that too?”

“I can. It’s a secret to other people.”

“What if I don’t keep the secret – why are you going around telling me? This ahjussi has no sense of caution.”

“That’s why contracts exist – to prepare for that. Awakening you is after we sign the contract. If you decide not to Awaken and go around telling the secret, who would believe you? You don’t even have proof.”

If you do this, you can become an Awakened Person! All sorts of rumors like that were all over the internet. So if she went around saying that there was someone who could Awaken you, it wouldn’t receive attention. And there were already conmen who said similar things so it’d receive doubt instead.

Bak Yerim, who was slightly frowning, locked in her thoughts, opened her mouth.

“If I become an Awakened Person, can I become independent? I don’t want to live in my uncle’s house.”

“You can become independent. In the first dungeon shock[16], a lot of minors became Awakened People so a special law was made. Starting from 14 years old[17], except for the restriction where you’re only allowed to enter a dungeon 2 levels lower than your rank, as a Hunter, you can get equal rights as an

adult. In other words, you can enter a guild without a guardian's permission. Haeyeon Guild has dorms so you just have to register as a Hunter and then you can leave your house."

The opinions on minors entering dungeons were still split. It was obviously a law with ethical issues, but when dungeons were starting to appear in the world, there weren't a lot of Awakened People. In that chaos, dungeons would also burst open, so it was a situation where you had to borrow the help of young kids.

Still, because of the restriction allowing only entrance into dungeons 2 levels lower than their rank, the casualty rate for Hunter minors was low. That restriction was lifted if you cleared a dungeon 10 or more times unharmed, or when you turned 18.

'After Awakening Centers are made, the age for entering dungeons steadily started to rise because there were a lot of Awakened People.'

That was only proper. But since this was before the special law was revised, there was no problem with Bak Yerim becoming independent.

"But not having a guardian will probably make some things difficult? You're still young so-."

"No thanks. Not having a guardian is a lot better. At this rate, I won't be able to bear it for longer and run away from home anyways."

Bak Yerim said, sullenly. Had she run away before? I also thought maybe I'd seen that in an interview.

"Your uncle doesn't treat you well?"

"Besides when I go to school, he doesn't give me a single cent for allowance and makes me slave away. This is after he took all my parents' possessions with me as an excuse! And that restaurant was made after selling our apartment. And then in front of others, he acts like a great person taking care of a kid who doesn't have anywhere to go!"

A glint of tears appeared with the angry yelling. There were a lot of people in the world who didn't care about their own flesh and blood when money was involved. But if you got all the possessions, give some care, this was too much.

"If you want, I can give you legal help too."

If it was a good enough guild, they had some lawyers. Haeyeon Guild definitely had some, and if it was for a guild-affiliated S-Rank, then they should actively try to help.

"No. I just don't want to be involved with him again."

"Okay, do as you want. It's a little bothersome^[18] to keep talking while standing here – it's a little early but you want to go eat dinner?"

Since, to use the skill, we had to talk to each other more.

"Tripe... you probably don't like that. Is there anything you want to eat?"

"No, I like it. Though Uncle's doesn't taste good. There's a well-known place in front of here, so follow me. Is it okay if it's a little expensive?"

"It's definitely okay. You can eat as much as you want!"

I had a Haeyeon Guild company credit card. I brought it saying that I would use it for entertainment expenses when I find an A-Rank or higher. So you can spend a whole fortune, it's okay!

[1] apparently a type of ice cream popsicle, according to context further down the ch. It's in eng transliterated into krn. Pls don't think horny thoughts.

[2] censored already (□ □) in the raws

[3] actually, he said 'throat' but I think this sounds better in eng

[4] actually lit. "you won't come here?" but the implied meaning is "come back here!"

[5] 저기-: he's about to say "저기요" which is lit. "over there", but it's used as "excuse me"

[6] lit. "just all die" but I thought it sounded more natural this way in eng

[7] -san actually means mountain so technically it should be 'Nam Mountain' but apparently in eng it's called Namsan Mountain

[8] actually it says 'shoes' but Hermes is known for his winged sandals

[9] it's normal for adults to call young people (like middle school ~ college-ish age) 'student'

[10] lit. "I don't do (sex with minors/statutory rape)" where the () is one word. But tl-ing exactly like that in eng makes it seem like YR is doing the () even though she's the minor in question.

[11] I think this means that the atmosphere was icy and delicate/risky, and then it got even worse bc the expression “atmosphere broke” in krn generally means the atmosphere changed, often for the worse.

[12] ahjussi (아저씨): something you call middle aged men

[13] krn men have mandatory military service

[14] what girls call their older brothers, or boys (who they are close to, but also celebs, as in this case) a little older than them (i.e. within the same generation)

[15] lit. “the most hot” where ‘hot’ was transliterated from eng. It’s the figurative meaning, of course.

[16] this word appeared in a previous ch... I think the one that introduced YR’s name? Anyways, it’s the eng word ‘shock’ transliterated, so I’m assuming this means something in particular in this genre but idk what that specifically is.

[17] this specifies the age as “fully 14 years old” which basically means western way of counting age, since krn age = (western age that you turn that year) + 1 yr (you are considered 1yo when you are born), and everyone turns their new age on new years. So, for ex: if your birthday is in June & in June 2019, you will turn 15 by western age, then your krn age starting from Jan 1st 2019 (until Dec 31st) is 16, even though your western age at that

time is still 14.

[18] actually it's lit. "a little like that" which is just a vague way of saying something is annoying/difficult/etc. so the specific emotion isn't said. That's a common phrase ppl say in krn but it doesn't tl well in eng.

Chapter 13: < Second S-Rank (2) >

< Second S-Rank (2) >

-Chiiiiik[1]

Against the super fancy[2] marbling, the chuck flap tail[3] made a delicious sound as it was lowered onto the grill. Next to it, Korean beef tripe was puffed up and sizzling with fat.

The world was definitely worth living in.

It would be great to have a bottle of soju or beer but it wasn't right for this situation.

"You can drink alcohol."

"...Hm?"

“Your face looks like you really want to drink. I’ve seen drunk people everyday so you don’t have to worry.”

.....Was my face too obvious or could she read minds?

“I can’t get drunk when we have to talk about the contract. And the person in front of me is a formidable opponent. I’m afraid I’ll get robbed if I get drunk, so I can’t.”

“Rather than me being formidable, isn’t it that ahjussi[4] is too soft?”

Bak Yerim smiled delightedly. It seemed like her grumbling mood had loosened.

To make it easy to talk, we deliberately went into a room so there weren’t other customers nearby. In the first place, the time was a little awkward so there weren’t a lot of customers at all.

Kim Sunghan refused the proposal to each together, and after carefully looking around the inside of the restaurant, he went outside, saying he would wait there. I should just give up on making that person an S-Rank. We weren’t getting close at all.

“Anyways, did you really know my parents?”

Bak Yerim asked, picking up a piece of meat.

"If we didn't know each other, how would I have been able find you right away. We didn't know each other well, but I was once indebted to them when I was young."

"When you were young?"

"Yeah. I lost my parents early too. Trying to survive while taking care of my young dongsaeng was difficult."

I was running myself ragged trying to sell the story. But this was something emotionally moving for Koreans – tragic circumstances of losing parents early in life and having no one to turn to, etcetera. Even with just sympathy votes from losing your parents, you could become the president.

"Back then, your parents gave us a little help. That was already around 10 years ago so you probably don't remember."

Of course, I didn't remember either. Pouring a cup of cider, instead of alcohol, I continued speaking.

"Before Awakening, I was busy with just surviving so I didn't have time to think about looking. I had an S-Rank Awakened Person as a dongsaeng but until recently our relationship wasn't good."

“Really? Now that I think of it, I don’t think I’ve ever heard about Haeyeon Guild Leader’s family.”

“We made up a few days ago. I Awakened, and got a useful skill, and made up with my dongsaeng. With things settling down, I remembered past things. It’s a little selfish, right?”

“What do you mean selfish. Just look at my uncle! There are a lot of people who repay good with evil, so remembering even a while later is better at least.”

Bak Yerim said, puffing out her cheeks. The inside of those cheeks was full with well-stuffed meat-ssam[5]. She eats well.

“Hey, that’s chili.”

“I like spicy things.”

Saying that, she even dipped raw garlic[6] in ssamjang[7] and ate it. Just how many pieces of garlic did she put in her ssam. If it wasn’t cooked, I would get heartburn, so I couldn’t eat it.

“So I asked around and found you. At first, I was just going to ask if you needed help with anything, but your Awakening aptitude was really outstanding.”

“Euaeuuuh.”

“Speak after you swallow.”

Did that bastard uncle starve his niece or something.

“Then all I have to do now is sign the contract with ahjussi?”

“Yeah. Awakening can be right away or might take a few days according to the situation. It won’t take long.”

“It’d be good if it’s right away. When I get home, it’ll be a huge fuss.”

“About half is luck but I’ll try.”

How do I say the keyword. Should I speak more about parents?

First, I took out a contract from my inventory. Bak Yerim’s eyes became round at seeing parchment appearing out of the air.

“That’s the inventory, right? This is actually my first time seeing it.”

“You’ll also get one soon. You can only put in dungeon-related things, but it’s convenient.”

You couldn’t put in normal things. You could only put things from a dungeon or things only made up of byproducts from dungeons into the inventory.

“There are 3 conditions for the contract. Don’t talk about my skill to others. Taking on being my guard for a year from now on. Contracting with Haeyeon Guild.”

“Ahjussi’s guard?”

“Yeah. I’m only an F-Rank so I need someone to protect me. So while I was looking for a suitable person, I saw you.”

“Hey[8], but still, to get protection from a 15-year-old. Aren’t you embarrassed?”

“Even a 10-year-old is stronger than me if their stats rank is higher, so I’m not embarrassed.”

Getting all the way here, how would I suddenly be embarrassed. Simply replying, I took out a pen. This pen and the ink inside were all made from dungeon byproducts. I had spread out the contract and was writing down the conditions when Bak Yerim stretched out her neck and peeked at it.

"If you violate the contract, for 1 year all stats 20% drop? The penalty is just this? Even if you break it, it doesn't seem like a big problem."

"20% drop means that the dungeon you can clear is one rank lower. The difference in the amount of money you make is huge."

"But you can still rest for one year."

"That's true. But this is a Hunter Association certified contract. If you break a contract, your credit rating will drop to the ground. Depending on the degree, your Hunter license can be suspended too."

That was why if it wasn't a backdoor deal, a Hunter Association certified contract was a lot better than an illegal contract with a strong penalty.

"I thought Awakened Person contracts had horrible penalties."

"Those exist too. They're illegal though."

"Only Awakened People have stats so does the effect still work even if we contract now?"

"It doesn't matter. This has a curse skill applied to it and Unawakened people also get skill effects so your physical ability will probably drop 20%?"

“A curse, you say, that’s scary.”

I wrote down all my conditions and signed it. Bak Yerim, who was watching me, quickly held out her hand for the pen.

“I just have to write down my name, right?”

When she took the pen and contract and was about to sign her name at once,

“Huh?”

I quickly took the contract back. Bak Yerim stared at me as if asking why I did that.

“Kids are definitely kids.”

“Huh, why?”

Sulking, she asked in a sharp voice. I shook the contract in front of her eyes.

“You should properly check it over before you sign.”

“But there’s no problem with it.”

‘No problem’, she says.

“You left out your conditions.”

“.....Huh, you’re right.”

Bak Yerim mumbled blankly. Right now, the contract one-sidedly contained only my demands. Maybe because she was embarrassed, her face became a little red.

“It’s possible to forget sometimes!”

“Of course, it’s possible to forget. But being vague and using that kind of excuse doesn’t affect the contract. That’s what it means to become an Awakened Person, a Hunter. You can get rights like an adult’s, but you also have to bear responsibility like an adult.”

I took back the pen and added conditions related to Bak Yerim’s Awakening and support.

“And, usually these contracts are adjusted. I already found out you’re going to become an

Awakened Person with a high rank. A prediction of an Awakening rank B or higher. This is extremely advantageous information for you. Wherever you go, you'll get good treatment and if you happen to be A or higher, it's a free pass to the 3 big guilds."

I spoke, pointing to the 'contracting with Haeyeon Guild' condition with the tip of the pen.

"But instead of negotiating the contract conditions, and signing it saying that you'll go into the guild, isn't that a stupid thing to do? Being taken by my saying I'll Awaken you right away and accepting – this condition is too disadvantageous to you."

I drew a line through the 'contract with Haeyeon Guild' condition, and revised it to 'preferentially contract according to conditions – contract conditions are more than Hunter industry average'.

"There. This should be a fair contract, more or less."

Bak Yerim must have been sulky or surprised; she stared at me with a confused expression. After a speechless moment, she opened her mouth.

"So what do you want me to do."

Was she angry?

“It might have sounded like nagging to you, but what I mean is you’re still at an age where you need an adult’s help. After you Awaken, there’ll be a lot of people trying to approach you. Even as a B-Rank, a dungeon lower by 2 levels is D-Rank, and if you clear them 10 times unharmed, you can even go into a B-Rank dungeon.”

An orphaned middle schooler with a yearly income of several billions of won. How easy would it be to take advantage. Not to mention, Bak Yerim was S-Rank. If it became known, not to mention within the country, it’d cause a stir in foreign countries as well.

“Among them, they’ll be a lot of guys who’ll approach you acting like a nice person like me, and try to take advantage of you. Just like how you almost got taken in, you’ll be easily fooled.”

“.....”

Bak Yerim’s gaze couldn’t meet the contract. Her expression was still stiff, but rather than being angry, her face looked as if she was lost in thought.

“.....But I hate my uncle.”

“Alright, I know. I won’t even recommend that kind of person to be your guardian. It’d be a relief if he doesn’t make off with the money.”

“He’d 100% run off.”

As soon as insulting her uncle came up, the tense atmosphere slightly loosened.

“If you’re okay with it, I want to assume that role for you.”

“...Isn’t supporting me the same thing?”

“It’s different. A simple supporter can’t participate as a Hunter in a deal. But if they have a guardian, even if the Hunter minor gets into a disadvantageous contract, invalid claims are possible. Usually, parents often handle it.”

For Hunters, just because they were your flesh and blood didn’t mean they could become your guardian. Only a relevant Hunter could directly appoint them.

“So... I was thinking to take on the role of your parents instead.”

I cleared my throat deliberately, pretending to be embarrassed. And truthfully, it was a little awkward too. Even before the regression, I wasn’t at an age to have a 15-year-old daughter.

“P-parent?”

“U-uh... Yeah. Of course there are various ways I’m ill-suited and insufficient, though.”

“...Why are you trying to do so much for me? Even if you owed my parents, you said it was just a small bit of help.”

“Because I also had a difficult time.”

It was a lie, and it was also a truth.

“It might simply be vicarious satisfaction. If only I could’ve had a reliable support back then, something like that. Though, I probably don’t seem that reliable.”

“Ahjussi seems like he’ll be reliable enough.”

“Really?”

“...Do you have to ask again?”

It seemed like she didn’t want to pay lip service twice. I was in the wrong for not being satisfied with once.

“Anyways, I understand.”

Bak Yerim bashfully rubbed her cheek with her palm.

“Um, please take care of me from now on...?”

“Okay, same here. So.....”

I should have just drunk. The regret came too late but there was no helping it. There was no choice but to say it sober. It also seemed natural to be embarrassed to death.

“I said I would act in place of your parents but of course I’m very lacking. But as much as your parents loved you, or rather not to that extent, um, how should I say it...Yerim, I love you?”

“Ack! What is that! So weird!”

Screeching, Bak Yerim’s face became red and she rubbed her arms as if she had gotten goosebumps. My face was also definitely red. Saying nonsense sober was really hard.

But, if the response was that much.

[Unawakened Person ‘Bak Yerim’ has been influenced by the keyword!]

As expected, it popped up.

[1] a sizzling/frying noise, esp with meat

[2] lit. 'fancy as if flower bloomed'

[3] this is a type of cut of beef

[4] ok I decided to keep in the 3rd person relationship signifiers (hyung, ahjussi, etc.) from now on instead of replacing them with "you". Not gonna go back and change everything before retroactively tho. If someone younger is using "you" toward someone older in the tl from now on, it's because no signifiers or pronouns are specified.

[5] one way krns eat meat, particularly grilled meat, is wrapped in lettuce or sesame leaves (or other leafy greens) along with condiments, sometimes rice, veggies, etc. This is called ssam. Things don't come already wrapped – all the ingredients are laid out and each person takes whatever they want and wrap each individually themselves as they eat. Ssam is also sometimes used to refer to other wrapped foods from different cultures, since the word literally comes from the word "to wrap".

[6] raw garlic (as well as cooked) is also an ingredient you can put in ssam. It's a bit spicier and tangier but imho it's really good.

[7] lit. “paste for ssam”, which is basically a mix of fermented soybean paste and chili paste

[8] a sound that implies playful disbelief or disagreement. The sound is actually “ey-ee” but it sounds like “eyy” which has a different connotation in eng.

Chapter 14: < Like a Shrimp (1) >

< Like a Shrimp (1) >

Whew, in the end, I figured out another case. Now all I had to do was finish the contract and Awaken her.

“Saying something I never say, it’s embarrassing as hell. Quickly sign, I’ll Awaken you.”

“Okay. Ah, it’s so funny.”

“Don’t laugh.”

“Even ahjussi’s neck is red!”

“You’re difficult to handle too, okay?”

Giggling, Bak Yerim signed the contract. As soon as the two signature lines were filled, the contract glowed weakly. Continuing, the surface became slippery as if it was covered in lamination. As if she was fascinated, Bak Yerim touched the contract.

“It looks like you can’t modify it.”

“It wouldn’t do if you could modify it.”

Taking back the contract, I put it back in the inventory. With this, the preparation was complete.

“Then, I’m going to use the Awakening skill?”

“Ah, wait a moment.”

She shook her hand and sat up straight as if she was going to go into meditation. Then, she took a deep breath.

“Will I Awaken right away?”

“If your luck is good. At the longest it’ll take a week.”

The Auspicious Seed-Leaf skill was applied immediately but I deliberately choose a week's time. Since I didn't know if I would be able to apply the keyword immediately like this time, when I Awaken a different person later.

"Okay, please do it!"

There was no need to be that nervous. I used the Auspicious Seed-Leaf optimized Awakening skill toward Bak Yerim. And then, shortly.

"M-message Window really came up! Ahjussi! Rank, how do I check my rank?"

"Think about opening your Status Window. You can say it outloud too."

"Status Window! Huh? Wow!"

Bak Yerim's mouth dropped open. Her whole face looked as if the word 'astonishment' was engraved into it.

That's right, it was certainly shocking enough. Stat rank S with skills that were as much as SS. An incredibly excited Yerim screamed and grabbed the table with her han-

“Ahjussi! I’m S-!”

-Pajik!

Huh? The table broke? I mean, did she dig her hand into it? The thick surface had sunken in in the shape of a hand. Oh my.

“Uh.....”

“D-don’t move!”

Ah, shit. Yoohyun definitely told me that C-Ranks and higher couldn’t immediately adjust to their suddenly changed physical abilities. Since Yerim was S-Rank... I messed up.

“Right now, your strength is a lot stronger than before. So don’t touch anything. Okay?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Okay. Let’s go out carefully. Move very slowly. Think about walking slowly, without even making a sound.”

Yerim stood from her seat slowly and carefully. It was a precarious movement as if she was walking on a tightrope. Watching this, I felt anxious as if in front of a young child who could fall off at any moment.

This was the 1st floor, with no basement, so that was a relief at least. Even if the ground broke, people wouldn't get hurt.

"Slowly, step by step. Yes, like that."

"I think I've gotten a little used to it."

"Still, you can't hurry. Apparently it takes at least a day."

Not looking away from her, I opened the sliding door. After putting on my shoes[1], I took care of Yerim's sneakers. Her sneakers were very old. And they looked big compared to Yerim's feet. At least buy her new shoes instead of handing over used ones.

"I'll put them on for you so give me your feet."

"Okay. Uh... I'm a little uneasy about standing on one foot though."

"Then sit down carefully. Slowly-."

Ack, a slight handprint was left on the floor. But unlike with the table, only a small crack was left. As I put a sneaker on a stretched-out foot, she must have found something funny because she burst out laughing.

“Isn’t this a little exciting?”

“Rather than exciting, it’s nerve-wracking.[2]”

Why would excitement come up here? After telling her not to touch anything, I looked around again and then went over to the checkout counter. I guess I should pay for the table.

“Here, to pay. And the table got a little broke-.”

“Ah, a fly!”

“Don’t!”

-Pajik

A table corner crumbled like some kind of biscuit. Yerim laughed, saying ‘oh dear’.

“I caught all the bugs in the restaurant. It must have become a habit,ahaha.”

Don't laugh. The employee inside the checkout counter stared back and forth between the table and Yerim with huge eyes. I'm so sorry for my kid. I handed over both an apology and a card.

“Please include the costs of our seated table and that table.”

It's okay to take off a lot.

The way back to Haeyeon Guild was relatively smooth. The car's frontseat headrest was crushed and once we got off, the sidewalk curb was split, but nobody was hurt so it was okay.

That said, don't come near, Yerim. She kept on trying to cling. The sudden change must have made you uneasy but if you just grab me once, my arm will shatter. I'm stat F.

I only told Haeyeon Guild's Guild Leader Yoohyun about Bak Yerim. That was because if word leaked out at any moment, it would become troublesome. I planned on letting word about the new S-Rank be known at the rank evaluation at the Hunter Association.

So that there wouldn't be any unfortunate victims, while Kim Sunghan was on guard against the surroundings, we went up the elevator. There weren't a lot of people in the lobby due to it being a weekend evening, so it was a huge relief. Excluding floors 1~3, to go into the

area, you had to go through a security check, but Yoohyun had notified them ahead of time, so thanks to that, we got to skip it.

“My heart is beating a little.”

As soon as the elevator door closed, Yerim came closer to me again.

“Don’t stick to me. There’s no place for me to escape.”

“I won’t disturb you. You think I can’t control it that much?”

“You’re saying that after crushing the headrest? If a person was there you would have become a murderer.”

At the talk of being a murderer, Yerim’s lip stuck straight out. I wondered if my words were too much, but thinking of the future, giving this amount of warning seemed better. An Unawakened Person and stat S-Rank were different to the extent of being different species.

In order to prevent accidents, she had to bear in mind constantly the truth that she wasn’t normal.

In the guild leader's office, there weren't other people and only Yoohyun was there waiting. As soon as we entered, this guy put on a business-like smile.

"Please come in, Bak Yerim-yang[3]."

"...Hello."

Yerim awkwardly bobbed her head in greeting. Strange, she didn't seem like someone shy with strangers.

"First of all, I will guide you to where you will stay while you are adjusting to the ability change. Stat S-Ranks finish adjusting in one day, on average. After that, it is possible for your daily life to stay the same as before, so there is no need to worry."

Yoohyun explained, courteously. It was definitely an unfamiliar image. Though if you thought about an S-Rank Awakened Person's worth, that was standard. Did I treat Yerim too casually?

"Please come this way."

Yoohyun took the lead and left the room. What do I do. It's getting to be time to feed Peace, so could I leave?

“Ahjussi, what are you doing not coming over!”

While I was standing there blankly, Bak Yerim gestured to me and called me over. She even glared at me, as if asking why I wasn’t hurrying. Now that I thought of it, I did say I would be her guardian. I guess I had to follow.

Unlike when we were coming up the elevator, the elevator didn’t stop at the 1~3 floors, and we went down to the basement. In the basement, there was a training facility for Awakened People.

Following the long hallway, Yoohyun continued explaining.

“The basement 2nd to 3rd floors are spaces for training. For safety reasons, you have to go to the training center located in Gyeonggi Province for the training for just A-Ranks and above in full-fledged battle. Skills with killing power especially are strictly prohibited from being used in the downtown area so please take care.”

“...It seems like there’s a lot to learn.”

“After registering as an Awakened Person, you will formally receive training. Until then, you only need to take care when using your skills.”

“Okay.”

Now that I thought of it, I wondered what Yerim's skills' effects were. I was curious.

"This stamina training room is where Bak Yerim-yang will remain for one day."

The place we arrived at was a wide room with various athletic equipment. There was a high ceiling, and the walls and floors that didn't seem to be made out of normal material stood out.

"Even if the equipment here are broken, it does not matter. Please use them to familiarize yourself with your senses. The walls and floor can handle an S-Rank level 1's physical strength. By any chance, is your Strength stat above 100?"

"No. It is 61."

"That much will be no trouble."

It was 61. It was as much as 3 times the sum of my stats. Just looking at Strength, it was 15 times. Just because the stat was 15 times didn't mean actual strength was 15 times, but it was definitely a difference that meant I couldn't dare to approach her.

"Over there, a showering room and a sleeping room has been provided. Again, if the two facilities are broken, there is no need to worry, but if possible, please use them after

adjusting to your strength to a certain extent.”

“What do I do if I need something?”

“You can request for it through the phone in the sleeping room. If you happen to break the phone, please press the emergency bell next to the sleeping room door.”

Yoohyun asked if she had any other questions besides that. Bak Yerim shook her head to reply.

“Then, the remaining information will be given tomorrow after you adjust to your abilities.”

Saying so, Yoohyun turned around. I should also go up and give Peace food. He[4] must be waiting.

“Ahjussi, where are you going!”

As I was about to turn, Yerim yelled shrilly. What do you mean, where.

“I’m going home.”

“And leave me here alone? How could you? You said you’d take responsibility!”

It wasn’t wrong but the nuance was a little odd. Yoohyun stopped walking out and turned his head to look at me.

“Responsibility? Hyung?”

“I said I would be her guardian.”

“Guardian?”

“Her parents aren’t here, and she doesn’t have a good relationship with the uncle she is living with. She didn’t want to be involved with that family.”

There wasn’t anything bad. But Yoohyun’s expression looked bad.

“If the guardians for Awakened minors aren’t their parents, they’re usually Awakened People whose ranks are higher or around the same. That’s the only way to have control. If she needs a guardian then it’s better if I-.”

“Ahjussi already said he would, okay?”

Bak Yerim cut in through Yoohyun's words. Her expression was icy, unbecoming of her age, and I thought of the ice witch Bak Yerim I saw in the past that was also the future. Why was she overreacting now.

"Bak Yerim-yang. Even just for the guardian's safety, that cannot be done. There are already many cases of guardians with lower ranks and not even a safety net of being blood-related being assaulted by their gardees while giving advice."

Uh... there was that kind problem too. Well, dealing with a teenager a lot stronger than you and going through the tough period of adolescence wouldn't be an easy task. Thinking like that, I got a little scared. Since the contract said that Yerim would protect me, would it be okay?

"I contracted to protect ahjussi. So there's no problem with safety. From the start I didn't have the thought to hurt ahjussi."

"Even so, there is also another problem of hyung not being able to properly take on the role of guardian. Not to mention, the difference in rank is too high, and other than that, various other troubles probably will follow."

"...I don't know, all of that. But."

Bak Yerim looked at me once and continued talking.

“If you don’t give me ahjussi as my guardian, I won’t enter Haeyeon Guild.”

...What? No, wait?

[1] last ch, they said they went into a room. In some restaurants, you can get private rooms with floors that are slightly raised platforms, where you take off your shoes outside and go in and sit on cushions at a low table.

[2] in the prev. sentence YR asks lit. “doesn’t this make [heart] flutter?” (where ‘heart’ isn’t really said, bc the particular word for “flutter” is often used by itself, and either way means “excitement”), and so YJ replied “rather than shake, my skin/flesh is trembling.” The meaning is as written in the tl.

[3] an female-only honorific that is basically the equivalent of “miss”

[4] I felt kind of bad using ‘it’ esp now that he has a name. Once again, krn doesn’t really use pronouns so idk if he even is a ‘he’ or a ‘she’ in the first place, and anyways who cares about gender. I’m just using ‘he’ just because.

Chapter 15: < Like a Shrimp (2) >

< Like a Shrimp (2) >

“Yerim? Didn’t you contract to enter Haeyeon Guild?”

“Wasn’t it preferentially, not no matter what? You revised it to that.”

Yes, I certainly did. Yerim said in a sharp tone of voice.

“I’ll put the condition of ahjussi being my guardian in my contract with Haeyeon Guild. I saw on TV that even A-Ranks can put all sorts of supplementary conditions? Most of it seems like receiving items, but there was nothing that disallowed people?”

That was true but why exactly me... did she remember that it hadn’t even been a day since we met? There shouldn’t be any reason to be so stubborn. Was there perhaps a side effect to the Awakening?

“Um, first, calm down. There’s no need to unnecessarily put that in the contract. Since appointing a guardian is your right, Yerim.”

At my words, her expression loosened up a lot.

“Really? So I don’t have to listen to Haeyeon Guild Leader?”

“It’s like that. I just have to accept-.”

“Hyung.”

.....This time it's you. I was wondering why he wasn't butting in.

“You have to decide carefully. It's not any rank, it's S-Rank. I've been through it so I know well, but if it's a young S-Rank, all sorts of bugs will come infest[1]. It'll probably be even worse because Bak Yerim-yang is 15 years old.”

“Still, isn't it better than letting a S-Rank Awakened Person go? If she becomes affiliated with the guild, things like that will be covered to a certain extent. It'll be okay as long as Yerim doesn't ignore my opinions – she's not that bad of a kid...probably?”

“I'm a good kid.”

Bak Yerim immediately answered. At the same time, she quickly came over to my side. It seemed like she would have grabbed my arm and pulled if she had only adjusted to her strength.

“It's because of my uncle's family, especially Bak Soochun that son of a bitch, that my personality became a little bad, I'm originally a good kid. When I was in elementary school, my teachers praised me a lot.”

“...Then can you stand a little apart? Just one step, no two steps.”

I was afraid she would thoughtlessly grab my arm in excitement. Even lightly pulling it would pull it out, probably. Bak Yerim obediently stepped back. And then looked at me expectantly.

That’s right, you are a good kid.

Taking a deep breath, I turned back to my dongsaeng. Just how did I become like this between these two.

“If you’re a guild leader, before anything, you have to think about catching an S-Rank. Why are you acting so prickly after being amazing all this time.”

“If it’s an S-Rank that can’t control themselves properly, then it’s worse than nothing.”

“Hey, even if it’s like that, it’s a lot better to first catch them, and reap the rewards, and then transferring them.”

“Transferring? You mean sending away to another place, right?”

Yerim came closer again. Can you please maintain a safe distance.

“If you act too unruly then that can happen. But you said you’re a good kid. Then, there’s no problem.”

“You’re right, I’m a good kid. I guess it won’t be a problem.”

As if she was trying to prove that she was a good kid, she stepped back again. That’s right, please stay there obediently.

“Above all, like I said earlier, the problem of a guardian is between me and Yerim. As a guild leader, you can give advice at least, but consider interference past that as something excessive.”

At my words, Yoohyun gave a short sigh.

“If hyung is going to go so far as to say that, I can’t block you anymore. But be careful. Between Awakened People, more than anything, rank is first. Right now, when she’s just Awakened, it might be okay, but there’s no guarantee that it won’t change.”

Saying that, Yoohyun looked back at Bak Yerim. Bak Yerim didn’t avoid his gaze and met it headon.

The eyes of the two people looking at each other were icy. Stuck between them, the back of my neck hurt.

Just a little while ago, the atmosphere was okay. Exactly what was a mere guardian that you were acting like this.

“If rank is first above all, then guild leader must be like that too? That’s right, I heard you only just reconciled with ahjussi a few days ago. You must have fallen out because of that ‘rank’?”

.....Huh? Yerim threw down the glove[2]?

“It was just that we were shortly apart in order to protect hyung to the end. It’s different from someone who tries to keep him at their side purely to show off their greed.”

Then Yoohyun also struck back. At the words of ‘showing off their greed’, Yerim had a deathly furious expression.

Yoohyun, if she got so angry that anything she saw disappeared, you might be okay, but it’s dangerous for me.

“You two, stop it.”

I quickly cut in, in case a shrimp’s back might burst.[3]

“Why are you so aggressive over nothing important.”

“It’s not nothing important, though?”

“It’s not nothing important.”

Fuck, fine, it’s something important. Why were you in agreement now of all times. Making someone embarrassed.

“At any rate, let’s stop here. If you want to continue fighting, I’m leaving, so you two figure it out yourselves.”

“Hyung?”

“Ahjussi, are you sulking?”

Sulking, what do you mean, sulking.

“I’m like this because I’m afraid. If you guys flail around, I’ll die.”

"I won't!"

"The time for me to make that kind of mistake has already passed."

At Yoohyun's words, Yerim glared at him.

"I'm going to adjust soon too!"

"I got it so don't play your battle of nerves in front of me. I feel like a shrimp between a whale fight.[4]"

It wasn't good for my heart. At my words, both of them shut their mouths. Surprisingly they were listening to me well.

"This is the end of the guardian discussion. And Yerim, I'm sorry but I can't stay with you here. When you break equipment trying to adjust, if debris flies around, it'll be too dangerous. Instead, I'll come down early tomorrow morning."

"...Yes, I understand."

Bak Yerim looked dissatisfied but nodded her head.

“Oh right, even if your relationship is bad, shouldn’t you at least contact your home? It’ll be bothersome if they report it.”

“There’s no need. There were a lot of times I fought with them and stayed over at a friend’s house. Please just contact my school.”

“Okay. Then I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I left the training room and went toward the elevator. My dongsaeng walking next to me had on an expression that said he didn’t like the guardian issue but didn’t say anything about it.

“What kind of person is Bak Yerim’s past guardian[5]?”

Yoohyun asked. I replied while pressing the elevator button.

“Someone who thinks money is more important than their flesh and blood. He took all of Yerim’s parents’ possessions and didn’t even buy her one pair of shoes. He makes her work at their restaurant without pay.”

“Then there’s a high possibility that he’ll be troublesome in the future.”

“100% for sure. So give him[6] some money.”

“To shut him up with money?”

“Something like that.”

I had dealt with that kind of person several times. That kind of greed had no end so they were never satisfied with receiving a lot one or two times. So you had to reliably grab their weak point.

It wouldn't do to have a single scratch on our precious S-Rank-nim, right?

“And now that Yerim is here, I'll also move to the employee dorms.”

I said, watching the elevator door open. Haeyeon Guild also had outside company housing but we couldn't live there because there would be people being troublesome about the new S-Rank and also because of Peace.

“...What are you doing?”

When I entered the elevator and turned around, Yoohyung was pressing the door button with an unhappy expression on his face.

“You like that girl that much?”

What kind of nonsense was he sprouting now.

“It hasn’t even been half a day since I met her. There’s been no time[7] for liking or not liking.”

“Even so, you take care of her too well.”

“It’s obviously an adult’s responsibility to take care of a young kid. And, if I don’t do that much for her after bringing her here to help me, would that make me even human?”

We said the guardian discussion was over so why was he acting like this again. ...Don’t tell me it was because I said I was going to move out? Just in case it was that, I added on.

“I’m moving into the dorms because it’s more comfortable in different ways. I’m not going to completely move out, but rather use both. It’s a little awkward to move Yerim into your house, right?

Yoo Hyun’s house had, of course the greenhouse filled with dungeons organisms, as well as several S-Rank items labelled as personal collections. So you couldn’t let anyone go in and out as they pleased.

“If you’re talking about an outbuilding, I guess having one would be convenient.”

Yoohyun said, as he entered the elevator. So it really was because of that.

“I have a separate residence for receiving guests, too.”

“A separate one?”

“A separate house is good for quietly meeting with people. There are all sorts who don’t want to draw attention.”

The sort of person who doesn’t want to draw attention – did he mean unregistered Awakened People?

Of course, not all Awakened People registered at the Association. Especially if they were people who weren’t going to attack dungeons and wanted to use Awakened abilities on normal people, they stayed far away from the Hunter Association. They were doing illegal things so if they went and registered all their abilities and skills, it would be like saying ‘come arrest me~’.

I wondered if Yoohyun also did bad things behind my back but I didn’t ask. Whether I asked or not, there was no way his hands were clean.

Before my regression, even I..... um. There's no need for the disappeared past to come up.

"Since Bak Yerim-yang is going to be here for 1 year... I guess there'll be all sorts of things to prepare."

Saying that he would be busy for quite a while, Yoohyun got off at a middle floor. I went straight up to the house and looked for the greenhouse.

"Peace!"

The red cat with a horn wagged his tail on the other side of the glass walls. He jumped around and made a fuss as if he was extremely happy to see me.

"This cute little brat!"

I quickly opened the door and took Peace out.

-Kkiang!

"Right, right."

When I picked up Peace, who was clinging to me, the warmth and heat calmed my heart. Ahh, my stress was melting away. You're definitely the best. Maybe this was why people had pets.

"Let's go eat~."

Instead of human S-Ranks, I thought it would be nicer to raise magic beast S-Ranks. See, look how well-behaved and cute they are.

Going to the kitchen, I put Peace down on the floor, and took out raw meat from the fridge. Not beef, or chicken, or pork – it was monster meat. I put the meat that had a sheen of blue into the grinder and finely grinded it. Then, I took out a glass bottle from my inventory.

The glass bottle that was slightly smaller than a 500 mL water bottle was filled with red magic stone powder. It was powder from twenty C-Rank magic stones, in other words, a glass bottle worth 200 million won.

"Like this, my sense of money is going to get twisted."

10 days' worth of pet feed was as much as 200 million. One month was 600 million. Money is meaningless, huh.[8]

-Kkeureureuk

Circling my feet, Peace urged me to hurry and feed him.

“Okay, I’ll feed you soon.”

I took some of the magic stone powder with a measuring spoon and then mixed it with the ground meat. Then I gathered some into a round ball about the size of half a fist.

“Peace, come here. It’s food.”

Following a dog training video I had watched, I attracted Peace’s attention with the meatball. Golden eyes stared at the the meat in my hands.

Good.

“I love you.”

Speaking clearly, I gave the meatball to Peace. He ate well as if it was tasty. Repeating this a few times, I fed him the remaining meat.

Would it take a few days of training for there to be an effect? Animals like dogs and cats

had a certain amount of intelligence so I didn't think it would take long.

-Kyareung! Geureureung

Peace, who was full, bit my foot painlessly as if telling me to play with him. Should I buy some toys? Would cat toys be better, or dog toys?

I picked up Peace, who was jumping around, and went to the living room. I sat on the the sofa, and when I took out the light fabric belt out of my inventory and waved it around, he quickly bit onto the end and pulled. Since it was B-Rank, it wouldn't rip, right?

-Keureung, geureureu

"Do it gently, gently. I'm not strong."

Should I take out the manticore gloves and put them on? It was going to get even hotter, I shouldn't have bought leather gloves. Should I ask the guild for a good item? Or raise my level, in the end?

'How much was an F-Rank exclusive entrance pass, again?'

If I had to go behind Yoohyun's back, I had to buy an exclusive pass that definitely guaranteed secrecy. Before my regression, I hadn't done it outside of bidding so I couldn't

remember. A higher level F-Rank dungeon bid was about 300 on average. To be exclusive, at the very least, it had to be twice that.

‘Speaking of, how much money did I have?’

I couldn’t remember my bank situation as far as 5 years back. Firstly, there would at least be the Awakening registration subsidy; did I open an installment savings account?

‘I retired because I was going to meet an Awakening broker... I think I took everything from my retirement fund to my savings.’

In my memory, I definitely didn’t get to handing over the money. Then I’d have a considerable amount of money in the bank so I need to check... what was my PIN number[9] again.

‘.....Why would I remember anyways.’

5 years ago, I changed my password up to 3 times while getting it reissued. Are the so-called regressor guys who aim for winning lottery tickets, geniuses? I didn’t even remember my password.

“Guess I’ll have to go to the bank, too.”

-Keureureung!

“If I have some extra money, should I buy some stocks? What were the ones that rose, again?”

Work, my memory. There definitely were several stocks that shot up when dungeon-related new materials or new goods were developed. Which pharmaceutical company was it that developed the hair loss remedy?

Just then, I felt my cell phone vibrate. When I took the phone out of my pocket to check, an unknown number was calling me. There wasn't a sign that said it was an advertisement, so who was it?

“Peace, play by yourself for a bit. Hello?”

[Hello, Han Yoojin-ssi.]

A man's voice came from the cell phone. It sounded like a voice I had heard before. Who was it again?

[I am Haeyeon Guild's head of human resources, Suk Simyeong.]

.....Fuck, it was this bastard. Should I just hang up.

[1] not sure what he means here. Obviously he's speaking metaphorically, so I think he means nasty people (bugs) will gather around YR. If so, kinda uhh cold that neither of them points out that should be a reason they should protect YR instead of an unfortunate side-effect of having to put up with her or straight out abandoning her

[2] same as eng phrase

[3] from the saying 'in a whale fight, a shrimp's back bursts' which means when two strong people fight, weak or innocent bystanders get hurt. I couldn't think of a similar eng idiom so I left the lit. tl as is.

[4] see footnote [3]

[5] when they were talking about YJ being YR's guardian or a Hunter's guardian, they used a word (후견인) that is more technical & often comes with the connotation of a "financial backer". The "guardian" (보호자) used here is a much more common word, meaning a legal guardian (aka someone who takes care of you instead of a parent).

[6] there is no direct object here, which is normal in krn, but that also means it's vague but I'm assuming he means 'him'

[7] the actual word used is "reason/grounds/basis" but that doesn't really make sense in eng

[8] lit. “money isn’t money”, i.e. it’s so expensive that money is useless/money isn’t valuable anymore.

[9] lit. “official authentication certificate password” but I think it means a PIN #?

Chapter 16: < Head of Human Resources (1) >

“The S-Ranks that I’ve Raised” Translation Ch. 16

< Head of Human Resources (1) >

[Han Yoojin-ssi? Can you not hear me well?]

As I didn’t respond, Suk Simyeong spoke again. I wanted to say I couldn’t hear and hang up.

Haeyeon Guild’s head of human resources, Suk Simyeong. He was an unusual man who didn’t go into dungeons much despite being a B-Rank Awakened Person and stuck to an office job. So there were rumors that he had skills related to human resources.

He was a big shot about whom it wasn’t an exaggeration to say was trusted with most of the Guild’s affairs, and as one of Haeyeon Guild’s founding members, he, along with the head of the legal team Kim Hayeon, were exempted from dungeon attacks. You could say that he was a foundation that fully supported the super young Guild Leader, but.

...He and I didn't, kind of, really get along.

He was someone whose specialty was to reduce people to complete messes by cutting into them with his knife-sharp tongue. Fuck, back then I was really depressed and furious and bitter, and couldn't sleep at all so I even considered drowning myself in dish water[1].

[If you cannot hear me, I will go up there directly.]

"Ah, no. I can hear you."

What do you mean come up! I don't want to see your face. I had enough goosebumps just listening to your voice, don't come here!

[That is good. As it seems you could not hear well, I will introduce myself again. I am called Suk Simyeong, Haeyeon Guild's head of human resources.]

"...I am Han Yoojin."

Why did he call me?[2] Was it because of Yerim? Then he could just directly contact Yerim tomorrow... ah, I'm her guardian. Shit, should I not have said I would be her guardian? Why do I keep on choosing to do regretful things? I hate this person, I really hate him. I should have escaped from Haeyeon Guild from the beginning. Why didn't I think of the fact that I

would have to interact with this bastard? If you're the head, then get one of your subordinate employees to do it. Was it because she's an S-Rank? Damn, should I run away at least now?

[First of all, please take care of me from now on.[3]]

"Ah, yes, me as well... please take care of me."

Unlike in my trauma, Suk Simyeong's voice was calm and graceful. He was a middle-aged gentleman who looked exactly like he would appear on the cover of an economic magazine. My first impression was quite good. He looked competent and kind.

...'Kind', yeah right.

[I have heard a little about Bak Yerim-nim from Guild Leader[4]. As the guild's head of human resources, I would like to offer my gratitude and admiration.]

"Yes. Thank you."

Suk Simyeong's attitude was polite as ever. Then again, this time I hadn't made any big troubles yet. ...Then is it ok? I don't have to be afraid? I probably wouldn't get stabbed in the back this way.

[It is enough that I wish to bring you into the human resources team, if you are willing.]

Are you crazy!

“No! No thank you. This time was just, just an accident.”

No matter how different the situation was from before my regression, I didn't want to work looking at Suk Simyeong's face. If I did, I'd probably get chronic indigestion from the stress.

[Even if it was an accident, I think it is an achievement that should not be diminished. From now on, it will become a huge assistance to Haeyeon Guild in various ways.]

“Is, is that right.”

That I would hear praise from this person, it was worth regressing. How should I say it, it felt like my ear was itchy[5].

[I have contacted Bak Yerim-nim's school. I have heard that she would be finished adjusting to her abilities at least by tomorrow afternoon. If she actively uses the equipment inside the training room, then it is possible that she will finish in the morning.]

“Yes. I was thinking of going down to check on the situation early tomorrow morning.”

[It seems you are busy. Guild Leader expressed his concerns, but I believe that Han Yoojin-ssi will make a fine guardian.]

...Why was this ahjussi so amiable? Was he so pleased that an S-Rank newbie was brought in? Though, it was something to be pleased about. It might be different if it was after Awakening Centers appeared and there was a sharp increase in Awakened People, but there were no domestic Guilds that had two S-Ranks.

Haeyeon Guild might suppress the 3 big guilds a lot faster than before my regression.

[I will discuss matters specifically regarding Bak Yerim-nim's contract with you face to face.]

"Yes....."

I didn't want to meet him but there was no helping it since I was Yerim's guardian. Still, if he was nice like now, then it would probably be okay.

[Do you have any matters outside of this that you would like to ask about?]

"No, I don't."

[Then, I would like to extend my greetings once again[6], and I will contact you tomorrow in the morning.]

“Yes, I will see you tomorrow.”

As soon as the call ended, a sigh burst out of me. It’s okay, the mood is good. Let’s stop trembling.

-Kkiang?

As if asking what was wrong, Peace cocked his head and laid the belt he was biting on my lap. Reaching out with my hand, I stroked the soft fur around the uni-horn.

“Suk Simyeong, and other people, too. They don’t remember the past me so it’s okay.”

The current me was still clean. There wasn’t a single drop of blood on my hands.

Everything had disappeared.

This ‘regression’ thing was quite comfortable.

“Peace, do you want to sleep together today?”

-Gareureung

“Alright, come here.”

I held Peace and stood up. Instead of thinking about useless things, I should go to bed early.

‘Did she have a lot of stress?’

I mumbled to myself, seeing the scene of complete devastation. In the training room that was normal just yesterday evening, there wasn’t a single piece of equipment left.

It wasn’t just to the point of being broken; you couldn’t recognize anything at all. Since they were made with Awakened People in mind, the durability of those equipment shouldn’t have been normal either. To this extent... were you doing origami?

“Didn’t you say your Strength stat was 61?” I asked, looking at the paper... crane that you couldn’t even guess the materials of. It wasn’t paper but I couldn’t say anything but paper.

“Does that much become to this extent?”

At my question, Yerim proudly smiled.

“I used my skill. Of course, not an attack skill, but a buff skill.”

“Buff skill? That... what is it?”

I was about to thoughtlessly say the skill's name. Yesterday was so busy, I couldn't ask about her skills. After getting into the car, in the middle of calculating the average stats, the frontseat headrest was crushed. While she was waving her hand around at the joy of being an S-Rank.

“It's Shadowless Day. It's an SS-Rank skill,” Yerim bragged. At any rate, I was wondering, so Shadowless Day was a buff skill.

“An SS-Rank, that's impressive. What kind of skill is it?”

“It's a wide-range buff with a special effect. Designated stat 30% increase and designated attribute skill effect 20% increase, I can swallow an enemy's shadow and stop or slow down their movements, and according to the quality and amount of the swallowed shadow, there's an additional buff.”

Designating a stat and skill to buff, debuffing an enemy, and even an additional buff. Sure

enough, it was great, being an SS-Rank skill. If it was a debuff that stopped movement, the effect usually differed according to the difference between the user's rank and the opponent's rank. Since it was an SS-Rank skill used by a stat S-Rank, at most B-Rank and lower monsters would just become sitting ducks[7].

...My useless L-Rank skills, follow this example. It was just an SS-Rank but its effectiveness was great.

I put on a very impressed expression and clapped.

"That's really impressive! How are your other skills? You have others, right?"

"Yes! I have Hermes' Sandals, White Corpse, and Cold Sigh. The first two are S and Sigh is A."

Cold Sigh was one of Bak Yerim's initial skills when she was famous as an ice witch. So at least one of those appeared.

"Cold Sigh seems to overlap with Shadowless Day. This one also freezes and stops movement," Yerim said, as if disappointed. Usually, if you had skills that had the same effects, one was useless, but.

“Can they be overlaid on each other?”

“I haven’t checked so I don’t know, but it said that similar and same skills couldn’t be overlaid... just a minute. Shadowless Day.”

As soon as she spoke, she displayed her skill. Around Bak Yerim’s feet began to dye white and the shadows that were short because they were under the light bulb stretched out 2-3 times their original length. As soon as she stepped on the shadow of a roundly smashed up iron ball, the shadow disappeared as if melting away.

So that was how you used it.

Continuing on, a faint fog spread and froze the iron ball.

“They can be overlaid!”

“As expected, they can. Cold Sigh freezes things physically and Shadowless Day seems closer to curses or magic, so I thought it might be like that.”

“You mean the effects are similar but they aren’t actually similar skills?”

“That’s right. For example, moving something across a cliff by magic and moving it across by throwing with your strength – both give similar results but aren’t they completely different

actions? It's like that."

Skill explanations gave only the basic details so Awakened People had to try different things to find effective ways to use them.

"Cold Sigh is better to use so you should probably use it first, and then you can step on the shadows of ranks that weren't taken care of by Sigh and freeze them. The synergy between the two skills seems pretty good?"

"Is that so?"

"Of course. If you step on shadows first, there's a higher danger of you receiving a counterattack. But if you use first Sigh then Shadow, won't you be able to easily make your opponents into sitting ducks? Does it become applied as long as you step on shadows?"

"No. In the skill explanation, it said I had to disturb and absorb them."

'Disturb', you say. Meaning there wasn't anything about being proximity attack. I picked up a piece of metal that was lying around on the floor and handed it to Yerim.

"Throw this and check."

"By throwing it?"

Tak!

The flying piece of metal hit a triangular object's shadow. At the same time, the shadow disappeared.

"It works this way too?"

Yerim was surprised and turned to look at me.

"Since it said you just had to disturb it. Do you have any attack skills by any chance?"

It'd be perfect if she had a wide-range damage skill. But she shook her head with a regretful expression.

"Hermes' Sandals and White Corpse both aren't attack skills."

"Then?"

"Hermes' Sandals is agility increase and flight, short-distance teleportation, and White Corpse....." Bak Yerim trailed off. What kind of skill was it that she hesitated?

“That, it’s a skill that... pulls information from corpses.”

It sounded unpleasant. Still, it was a good and highly useful skill. Though it would be hard for a 15-year-old girl to use.

“For now, let’s hide White Corpse.”

“Hide?”

“That’s right. It’s advantageous to use those types of skills while keeping them hidden. There’s no need to reveal all your skills when you’re registering as an Awakened Person. Just write down Shadowless Day and Hermes’ Sandals, Cold Sigh, and downplay those skills’ explanations.”

It was better to hide one, or even better, several. Usually, people revealed effects that were easily exposed during battle, and hid effects that weren’t.

“For Shadowless Day, let’s just write down the buff and debuff. Don’t write down the additional buff that you receive. For Hermes’ Sandal, just the flight, and since Cold Sigh only has one effect, write all of it down. Normal flight-only skills are around A~B-Rank, so write down that Hermes’ Sandals is A.”

One SS, two A should be just enough for an S-Rank.

“Ahjussi, you really know a lot! You’re like some kind of expert!”

At my words, Yerim’s eyes sparkled in awe. I was at the bottom[8] for more than 4 years so this much was basic, how embarrassing.

“It’s nothing special.”

“But it’s only been a couple days since ahjussi has Awakened, too. And yet you know how to use skills and combinations, and tips like hiding; did you study these?”

“Not to the extent of studying... I just know a bit more than others since my dongsaeng is an S-Rank.”

If you live 5 more years and then regress, then you’ll also know this kind of stuff.

“It’s too bad you don’t have attack skills, but if you level up, you’ll get new skills.”

Usually skills appeared once every 10 levels. But there were situations where you had to meet particular conditions for them to appear, and there were cases where people would only have initial skills after over 50 levels if their luck was bad.

“What if I only get assistance types again?”

“Don’t worry. I’m sure you’ll definitely get attack types next time.”

Since Cold Sigh appeared, the probability of other ice-related skills appearing was high. If ice witch Bak Yerim’s wide-range representative Pale Rain appeared, that would be the icing on the cake[9].

My Brat definitely said that other skills than initial could also be acquired, right? Since the duration time was only 3 days, using it now would be a waste, so I should use it on her when she goes into a real match during training.

“You’ve adjusted to your abilities, right?”

“Yes! I didn’t sleep much and smashed the sports equipment!”

She was energetic for someone who didn’t sleep. Was it because she was an S-Rank or because she was young? Then again, even I didn’t think much of pulling all-nighters when I was young. Right after hitting 30, I slowly started getting more tired.

“Then let’s go sign the contract.”

I said, pulling out my cell phone. Even if it was my own dongsaeng's guild, public was public and private was private. We had to do it right.

[1] the phrase 'ram one's nose in dish water' is a way of expressing a ridiculous situation, and here YJ says lit. '...I couldn't sleep so much that I thought about ramming my nose in dish water and dying' which implies something like 'the situation was so absurd that I figured I might as well die'. Adding in the 'dying' part is sort of a play on words since it might be possible to drown yourself in dishwater if you really try, to express the idea that the situation is so dumbfounding/embarrassing that you'd go so far as to try out this ineffective method of dying, but he's not necessarily being literal about the dishwater because it's an idiom. It's most likely just a turn of phrase, which is why I'm clarifying the comment, but it's up to the reader to decide if he's also skirting around suicidal tendencies. I guess you could compare it to something like 'crawl into a hole and die'...? Which is the closest thing I could think of but I was unsure so I left the tl to be mostly literal.

[2] in krn, it's possible to express questions by grammatical structure without using "?" and by not using "?", it gives a more of a wondering/rhetorical nuance rather than an outright question. It's the same for eng to a certain extent but it still feels off for the most part if you forego the "?" so I've decided to add "?"s in from now on

[3] lit. it means something like 'I will offer my request (to treat/take care of me?) well' but it's something formal that you say when you meet someone. Like 'nice to meet you' but a lot more formal. I couldn't think of a better way to express it. In eng it sounds a bit more intimate, but in this case, it's supposed to be p business-like.

[4] he actually says 'guild leader-nim' but I didn't know if I should put that in or just leave it

as 'guild leader'. SSM speaks v formally. I also capitalized it and didn't put in a 'the' in front, bc the fact that he puts '-nim' implies that it's being used as a title

[5] the phrase 'ear is itchy' is used when you feel like someone is talking about you (ppl who read manga/watch anime, you're probs familiar w jpn analogous sneezing) but I think in this instance it means more like he's feeling embarrassed or shy? Not sure...

[6] he's saying the 'nice to meet you'/'please take care of me' phrase again but I couldn't word that in a way that wasn't clunky so I just stuck with this since it has a similar general meaning

[7] lit. 'scarecrows'

[8] meaning 'rock bottom' with the connotation 'of this world'

[9] lit. 'adding flowers to embroidery'

hapter 17: < Head of Human Resources (2) >

"The S-Ranks that I've Raised" Translation Ch. 17

< Head of Human Resources (2) >

It was an antique reception room. The entire interior was Eastern[1], and the classic Western furniture was arranged suitably in an unbalanced way. With Suk Simyeong's personality, all the antique furniture here must be genuine.

As guided, I sat down on a black leather sofa and a beverage was offered. The atmosphere here also seemed like they would ask about coffee bean types.

"Orange juice, please."

"Juice for me too," Bak Yerim, who was sitting next to me, said.

Sitting on the opposite side, Suk Simyeong had on a kind smile. It was a soft expression that seemed like, even if I suddenly hurled abuse at him hahaha, he would benevolently let it pass saying 'is that so'.

"I would like to first thank you for choosing Haeyeon Guild preferentially," Suk Simyeong said in a, not just polite, but also sweet voice. I had thought so since I first met him, but that ahjussi's voice was really great. With a gentlemanly face full of goodwill, as well as a good voice, he really seemed like someone born to be a business king.

Yerim also seemed like she was halfway reeled in by his voice. But I, who knew well just how poisonous that ahjussi could get, stayed steady.

It was stifling because you were pierced by that nice voice.

“To speak the truth, blood ties played a big role.” Following Suk Simyeong, I put on a smile and replied. “Before that, it’s also thanks to Bak Yerim-yang trusting in me.”

“First was ahjussi’s behavior that allowed me to trust him.”

Yerim quickly gripped my arm. Don’t cling while we’re doing business. This is an important contract for you.

“Bak Yerim-nim may not have attack skills yet, but Shadowless Day and Cold Sigh are enough for you to become a combat-suited Hunter. Your Strength stat does not quite reach S-Rank average, but since it is possible for an overall buff, there should be no problem.”

Suk Simyeong explained considerably accurately about Yerim’s situation. He didn’t know, but the past Bak Yerim was a combat magician so the Strength stat wasn’t very important. If she smoothly gets ice-related attack skills, she’ll just need to add a Mana stat buff and ice-attribute skill buff...

She’d be unparalleled. If she also got an additional buff, she’d be able to just sweep away any monsters.

Not to mention, Hermes’ Sandals was an agility buff and flight, with added teleportation; it was a total scam.

I stared at Yerim anew.

“What are you doing?”

“Ah, nothing.”

Since I gave optimized skills to an S-Rank, the connection was no joke. Even when she just used ice-related magic, she was strong, but now she had become a total monster. She would outshine[2] Yoohyun.

‘Speaking of, I should check Yoohyun’s status window too.’

There was still a lot of waiting time left for the My Brat skill, so I hadn’t checked. That guy also might have optimized skills he didn’t get so I should check and use my skill on him.

“A combat Hunter’s guild contract conditions are usually payment mainly in dungeon quotas and equipment. In the case of A-Rank and higher dungeons, each guild has their own quotas.”

A guild’s status differed according to how well it could manage A-Rank and higher dungeons. The current Haeyeon Guild probably managed the most dungeons after the 3 big guilds?

“Bak Yerim-nim is still a minor so you can start attacking B-Rank dungeons. If you wish to attack A-Rank and higher a little sooner, I recommend clearing dungeons that are around C or D 10 times.”

“We don’t want to rush attacking higher rank dungeons,” I said. Yerim was only just fifteen years old. Rather than rashly attacking A and higher dungeons, it would be better to get used to combat and using the skills in mid-to-low rank dungeons.

As a combat magician, the ability to apply skills was especially important so getting enough practice was important.

“For 1 year starting from now on, we want to prioritize growth.”

“That is an excellent choice.”

Suk Simyeong gave a small nod.

“We would also prefer to advise that route. Slowly gaining experience and cooperating with various guild members, and then forming a new S-Rank attack team is the best road to take.”

In an S-Rank dungeon attack team, at least one S-Rank combat hunter needed to be included. So for Haeyeon Guild, it was more advantageous for Bak Yerim to gain experience and make her own team instead of joining Yoohyun's team.

Since having two S-Rank attack teams meant that you could get the rights to several more jointly managed S-Rank dungeons.

"However, in that case, the contract period naturally becomes longer. In return, we will not hold back on the support Bak Yerim-nim will require for growth."

"I know there aren't any S-Ranks yet that have exclusively contracted with a specific guild."

Domestic S-Ranks were all guild leaders except for one who was affiliated with the government. Foreign ones were still mostly guild leaders or government-affiliated, and the remaining minority were all free agents, according to my memory.

Free Hunters weren't affiliated with anywhere and worked by cooperating through short-term contracts whenever the government or guilds requested for them.

"So even if she didn't didn't attack dungeons and was only affiliated, it would be a considerable profit for Haeyeon Guild. Increasing the contract period with the excuse of growth support is excessive greed."

A guild that has two S-Rank Hunters! Even worldwide, it would be the first and only, so even

just the value of holding that title would probably increase a lot.

The more I thought of it, it really made no sense that Yoohyun was so nitpicky about the guardian issue. Was that any way to behave as a guild leader? Not just setting up as a guardian, you should've made sure to stamp the contract even if you had to sell your hyung.

"You seem to have a better grasp on the Hunter community than I had thought."

Suk Simyeong had a surprised expression on his face.

I lived in that neighborhood for over 4 years. At rock bottom, I couldn't thoroughly know the world of high rank Hunters, but was there anyone who would know the general trends better than me? Currently there wouldn't be any.

If there weren't any prophets, I was the best.

"As you said, even just Bak Yerim-nim becoming affiliated to our guild is a great profit for us. It seems I was beaten[3] by rashly trying to rake in this profit."

Opposite to his words, Suk Simyeong looked like he was in a pretty good mood. What, did he lay another trap?

"In the case of A-Rank Hunters, renewal every year with an upper limit of 200% according to

performance, starting from the 2nd year in a standard 5-year contract, is an average contract condition. Thus, what do you think of a renewal without an upper limit every year according to performance, starting from the 1st year of a 3-year contract?”

Future guild-affiliated S-Ranks would usually set up contracts in 1-year increments, recontract with updated conditions.

But considering Yerim’s age and Haeyeon Guild’s growth rate, a 3-year contract wasn’t bad. After 3 years, she would be 18 years old, so she wouldn’t need my help anymore and it was suitable.

“What do you think?”

As I turned to Yerim and asked, she shook her head slightly.

“I didn’t really understand. Ahjussi can choose for me.”

“Basically, you’ll be affiliated with Haeyeon Guild for 3 years. You won’t be able to go to another guild.”

“What about ahjussi? Is ahjussi doing that kind of contract too?”

Huh? Why am I coming up here?

"I, well... I'm just like this? Guilds with a certain amount of awareness don't take in F-Ranks."

It might be possible with guild that was basically a friendly neighborhood gathering with a D-Rank or lower guild leader, but with even a C-Rank guild leader, F-Ranks weren't allowed. No, they did use those that weren't Hunters as handymen.

"No[4]. Ahjussi should also contract for 3 years," Bak Yerim said firmly. Was being her guardian not enough so she was trying to add more? Why was she being like this?

"I can put that in my contract conditions, right?"

"Of course, it is possible."

Yerim and Suk Simeyong talked back and forth. Won't you kindly ask for my opinion as well?

"Contract, what contract. I'm not doing it. I'm just going to help you take your place and pl[5]...rest."

I was going to give up on Kim Sunghan and just use my skills on and raise Yerim and Yoo Myeongwoo, Yoohyun too, from time to time. I was going to live easily raising monsters

instead of people, so why would I join a guild?

Just by raising one high ranking familiar per year, I would be able to spend a lot of money and live well, so why would I make things harder for myself?

At my words, Bek Yerim looked like she was about to cry.

“You said you would take responsibility! 3 years, just contract for 3 years!”

Stop pulling my arm. It hurts.

“Even without contracting, I’ll be your guardian for 3 years so don’t worry. If you can’t believe that then I’ll write up a new contract for me.”

“But it’s better to go into the same guild.”

“My dongsaeng is the guild leader here. I just didn’t officialy contract, but I’m basically halfway in. So I’m not going anywhere.”

I was going to chillax[6] here so where would I go? Yerim nodded her head with a little more relieved expression.

“Okay. You’re really not going anywhere else?”

“I’m not. There isn’t anywhere that would take me either.”

Right now, that is. Once I raised familiars, any guild would welcome me with both arms out. Though I had no intention of moving.

After appeasing Yerim, I started negotiating the contract conditions again.

An S-Rank Hunter’s base pay was about 10 million dollars[7] per year. It seemed like a little, but as stated, that was the base pay; the real earnings came from the dungeons, and in the case of S-Rank dungeons, the average distribution ratio was 8:2. The preparation expenses for dungeon attacks were all paid by the guild, and the attack team took the 8.

The team leader S-Rank Hunter took at least 5 and at most 8 from the attack team’s earnings, according to their contribution. Ten million dollars were nothing compared to attacking one S-Rank dungeon. So most Hunters looked at the earnings distribution ratio rather than the base pay.

“It should be your first time with a Hunter contract but it seems as if you are more proficient at adjusting it than I am,” Suk Simyeong said, looking at the increasing condition details.

That was because ahjussi hadn’t even reached his 3rd year and I was on my 4th. And if you considered just the amount of information, there was a difference of 4 and a half years, so I

could only be more proficient.

I'd seen the S-Rank Hunter feature series from the Hunter special channel over and over again more than 10 times. I learned about contract conditions pretty well.

"This could become the standard S-Rank combat Hunter contract. Although, I do not know when we will be able to recruit another S-Rank Hunter."

That was the standard contract. After the Awakening Centers were created and the number of S-Ranks slowly increased, all sorts of cases went through and it came out after about 2 years.

Specifically, it was the standard contract slightly altered to fit Yerim's situation. Since the standard contract was for adult combat Hunters.

"We won't use S-Rank equipment priority rights and auction rights yet. It'll be better to decide after checking her skills at level 10."

10 levels would be quick to pass. It'd be good if Pale Rain appeared. Then she could take ice-related equipment.

"All right. It seems you are perfect in various ways. Enough to earn Bak Yerim-nim's trust.

You seem like someone who has been active in the Hunter community for several years.”

“Haha, I just Awakened a few days ago.”

Did I act like I knew too much? But it seemed like a waste to not use the knowledge I’d already gathered.

After finishing up adjusting the contract conditions and printing out the contract, it was signed. Thumbprints were added too.

Yerim rubbed the ink on her fingers onto the back of my hand. Hey, brat, don’t draw a heart.

“You can go right to register as an Awakened Person tomorrow. I will send you the details.”

He probably also contacted journalists. Since it’d be an event that would be a huge topic, they’d probably package it up fancily.

“And these are the inheritances and related materials that should be returned to Bak Yerim-nim. You will be able to use them well.”

Suk Simyeong handed over a document envelope. Oh, thanks.

“We’ll use them well.”

That should be about it right? I was about to stand up from my seat when Suk Simyeong grabbed onto me.

“Please wait a moment.”

“Sorry[8]? Is there something else left?”

It seemed like we were done. Suk Simyeong’s determined gaze pierced me.

“I would like to contract with Han Yoojin-ssi.”

...Why me again? I said I wouldn’t!

[1] the dictionary gives me the definition of the word as ‘Or*ental’ but that’s a borderline slur so...

[2] lit. ‘hit [Yoohyun’s] cheek’

[3] lit. “hit by one blow” (or even more literally, “made to eat one bang”), which means what it sounds like, i.e. ‘be/get beaten’, ‘get one’s butt kicked’, etc.

[4] lit. “that can’t be/happen” but it’s one of the ways you say “no” in krn, but with a connotations of “no, I don’t want that” or “no, that’s not right”

[5] he cuts off in the middle of a word so I’m not 100% sure what he was about to say but I’m p sure it was gonna be “play”

[6] lit. “suck honey”, i.e. live easily. As for the tl, sorry, I couldn’t resist.

[7] it’s specified as dollars in text, as in USD

[8] actually he said “yes?” but it’s meant as “sorry?”/“excuse me?”/etc.

Chapter 18: < Head of Human Resources (3) >

“The S-Ranks that I’ve Raised” Translation Ch. 18

< Head of Human Resources (3) >

“I’m sorry but I’m fine the way I am now.”

I made my decision to live peacefully on top of a king lizard's carapace.

...That said, there was a lot of unfinished work, but leaving the precious skills I'd already gotten to collect dust was bit of a waste. Anyways, I was definitely not going to put myself forward and would live quietly and comfortably.

"Please think it over again," Suk Simyeong said, not giving up.

"Soon, it will become easy for anybody to try to Awaken. With the upcoming era where, according to the Hunter Association prediction, the number of domestic Awakened People will break through five million in 1 year, and more than 2 thirds of the population will become Awakened People in 3 years, is it not regretful to not display Han Yoojin-ssi's abilities at this point in time?"

Regretful, yeah right. With the way he was speaking, you'd mistake me for some kind of rare scout.

"Thank you for regarding me highly, but Bak Yerim-yang's situation was nothing but chance. There is hardly any probability of finding yet another lucky break like that."

Was what I said, but if I wanted to, I could find more people with the aptitude to become S-Ranks and optimally Awaken them.

But I wouldn't. This much was enough, why would I do more? Even just Yerim was troublesome enough. I was just going to give Yoo Myeongwoo his SS-Rank skill and put him in the guild, and then be done with it.

"Of course, I am not expecting you to bring over another S-Rank Awakened Person. That goes beyond excessive into a theft-like disposition. In fact, you do not have to scout new Awakened People at all."

"...Then?"

Suk Simyeong replied, with a twinkle in his eyes that didn't suit him, "With that keen insight and analytical skills, you can create^[1] a new system for the Hunter community together with us-."

"I can't!"

What was this ahjussi talking about! Insight or analysis or whatever, no matter how hard I work^[2] I don't have it! I'm actually cheating^[3]. I saw the answer sheet, in the future.

"Han Yoojin-ssi!"

"I won't, I can't. I don't have that ability! I didn't even get into college. I even left high school by taking the GED."

Give up at least with this lowly educational background.

“Educational background is not important!”

...I was about to swear. Go look up a job search site, there are plenty that filter out lower than college grads, okay? If you haven't suffered through a situation where you couldn't even submit your documents, then please shut your mouth.

“Anyways I can't do it, I won't do it, I really don't know how to do something like that. Even if you cut off my hand I won't sign.”

I was just going to sometimes use my skills and raise pets, living off my amazing dongsaeng.

As I blocked up my ears and insisted I definitely won't, Suk Simyeong seemed to give up eventually.

“All right. Then instead of human resources, let us make a general contract.”

“Can't I stay halfway attached like now? I don't have any reason to join an attack team or set foot in a dungeon claimed by Haeyeon.”

“The Hunter license guarantee and training are short-term so it is fine but to move to the employee dorms, you have to sign a contract. Especially because you will be entering, not anywhere else, but the residence targeted toward high-ranking Hunters. Even if you are the guild leader’s family member, you have to be clear about your affiliation.”

Suk Simyeong erased the agitated expression he had just a while ago and explained in a calm voice.

I guess since I had to be near Yerim, I couldn’t go into the normal[4] employee dorms. Though, Yoohyun’s house was company housing so if I, his brother, went and lived there, it wouldn’t be weird.

“Alright. But if it’s possible, I want to contract as a normal employee, not as a guild member.”

“Do you mean you do not want to receive the support for Hunters?”

“Yes. I want to receive just the training and then after that I don’t have any intention of working as a Hunter.”

At any rate, the only places I could go into were low rank dungeons. That much I could go into with my own money. I had enough equipment thanks to Yoohyun.

I was thinking of making a contract with Haeyeon Guild each time I raised a familiar, instead of working as an affiliated guild member. That way I could raise enough, and play enough.

As expected, being a freelancer was the best.

"It is possible, but instead, the conditions will be lowered. Currently, Han Yoojin-ssi has no intention of working other than your role as Bak Yerim-nim's guardian, is that right?"

"Yes. If that's possible."

"Frankly speaking, Han Yoojin-ssi's educational background and work experience fall short of Haeyeon Guild's standard hiring qualification requirements."

...A while ago you were saying things like educational background didn't matter. As soon as the situation changed, so did his words.

"Of course, discovering an S-Rank Awakened Person and successfully contracting them is enough to qualify to enter. The problem is afterwards. The first one or two months or so should be fine, but if you receive pay without doing any work, there will be talk. Since, strictly speaking, being Bak Yerim-nim's guardian is not guild business."

So it was that problem. I didn't really care. Even if some gossip came out, I'd already been publicly shamed[5] before, so it wouldn't even tickle me. There probably weren't many who had been cyberbullied as much as me?

.....Now that it had been brought up, I was feeling a little depressed.

“That’s fine. For the conditions, please just put in the minimum wage.”

I didn’t have to receive much pay. Even if I failed to apply the keyword to Peace, I still had stocks left. I remembered the name of the pharmaceutical company that developed the hair loss remedy, and I knew the companies that would have rising stocks thanks to the stream of S-Ranks that would come out the Awakening Centers.

For the stocks, I could cover that with my severance pay and my past savings, so the pay could just be enough to live off of. What was the current minimum wage again? Was it around 8 thousand won[6]?

“Minimum wage. It is unbearable to put that in as you will not even be working,” Suk Simyeong said, smiling. He didn’t mean he wouldn’t give it at all, by any chance, right?

“How about 5 thousand yearly for a condition of doing human resources work when requested? Within 10 hours per week.”

“...Please make it so that I can only use the company cafeteria.”

No thanks. I won’t take it. Just let me eat.

Working 10 hours per week for a yearly income of 5 thousand[7] would be child's play, but I didn't want to even step foot into the human resources team that had that ahjussi. He'd take everything I have.

"If you speak like that then I suppose there is no helping it." Suk Simyeong nodded, putting on a bitter smile. "As you want, we will only provide room and board."

.....Really just room and board? I mean, in these situations, shouldn't you be a little more caring? Cutting things off and throwing them away with no basis, this ahjussi definitely had a bad personality, unlike his outer appearance.

"Please contact me anytime if you happen to find a passion for work."

".....Yes."

Rather than rumors of nepotism coming out, I'd probably get lots of sympathetic gazes. Beside me, even Yerim was sending me pitying looks.

"Don't worry, ahjussi. I'm rich now."

"I have enough money too."

Though I'd have to save up and buy stocks.

Ah, but this was really too much. I even brought over and presented an S-Rank Awakened Person and all I got was room and board? Just in case, I snuck a glance at Suk Simyeong, who was straightening up documents.

"Is there no incentive for Bak Yerim-yang's successful contract?"

"Since it was a matter that occurred before you joined, of course there is not. Ah, should I add an incentive condition?"

...That there wasn't any because it was before I joined, it felt like I was scammed. Should I have tried to earn something when we were working on Yerim's contract? I looked out only for the kid. But there was still one thing left.

"Please add a condition for an incentive if I successfully contract with an S-Rank Awakened Person or A-Rank that is equivalent to an S-Rank, like a saint."

Yoo Myeongwoo. If you had an SS-Rank production skill, you'd be treated almost like S-Rank, like saints were, even if you couldn't go into an S-Rank dungeon.

I was originally just going to bring him in, but because I felt wronged, I should get paid.

At my words, Suk Simyeong put on an easygoing smile and took out a pen.

“I will add it to a certain extent. Please tell me the sum of money, as well as reward, you want.”

As I was about to tell him to just give me 100 billion, I stopped. At any rate, with time, I wouldn't be so short on money. So instead of money.

“Do you happen to know the fact that I am raising a baby Horned Flame Lion?”

“Yes, I was informed by Guild Leader.”

“How should I say this, that guy is pretty cute. He follows me pretty well. So I want to receive one baby monster around the same rank as a Horned Flame Lion, or three baby monsters that are one level in rank lower. With the condition that Haeyeon Guild will shoulder the taming and rearing costs.”

“Baby monsters?”

Suk Simyeong had a rare surprised expression. Then again, it was something shocking. Since I choose pets over money or items.

But the monsters that I would receive from the incentive would be entirely mine, unlike Peace, who was owned by Yoohyun and raised with his money.

If it was similar in rank to a Horned Flame Lion, I could take it into and attack a B-Rank dungeon, so it couldn't be compared to some small amount of money.

If I failed to apply the keyword, then well, I'd just gain one more pet. Since I wouldn't be raising them with my money, it wouldn't be a loss. Later, when the monster raising regulations ease up, should I go out on broadcasts? It'd be popular.

"...It is not an impossible condition but it is unusual. Do you have some other purpose?"

Suk Simyeong tilted his head, with a completely confused look on his face.

"Does it seem like I do?"

"It would make sense if you do, but... I do not know. I will add in the condition for now. However, high ranking baby monsters are difficult to catch, and do not often appear in auctions, so the payment may be late."

"S-Rank Awakened People don't appear often either, haha."

Of course, I was planning on making Yoo Myeongwoo into an SS-Rank production skill holder. If I used My Brat about three times, he'd probably be able to gain it, right?

We finished my joining and finally stood up from our seats. It would be great if I didn't see this ahjussi for a long time.

"Then I suppose we will see each other often from now on."

What was he saying. I wasn't going to even glance at the human resources team and was going to avoid them.

...He wouldn't come find me or something, right?

When we went outside, I examined Yerim's parents' inheritance materials that we received from Suk Simyeong. A 50-pyeong[8] apartment was sold off, and a commercial building was sold off with the excuse that it would be too hard to manage.

After snatching up this much, you couldn't even buy the kid sneakers? What a lack of conscience.[9]

"You're really not going to take legal action?"

At my question, Yerim nodded her head with an uninterested expression.

“I don’t want to be involved with them for a long time. Anyways you said my base pay was over 10 billion yearly.”

That was so, but. Then again, thinking of the future, it would be better to release the leeches after letting them take enough. It would be annoying if they kept on trying to contact us and kicked up a fuss by going on broadcasts with teary pleas.

“Then let’s drop by the legal team and get the necessary materials, and go directly to them. Since it’s still the morning, the restaurant wouldn’t be open, right?”

“On Sundays, they open at 1 pm, so we should go to the house.”

Yerim told me the house address. So they lived in a good neighborhood. Then again, how much was it that they snatched up? That said, the shop looked deserted and shabby.

They wouldn’t have squandered the inheritance already, right? Then it would be even easier to grab their weakpoint.

[1] the verb comes last in krn (S DO V, or DO S V, etc.) so there is no verb in this cut off sentence, but eng doesn’t work like that so I had to make do.

[2] lit. ‘make porridge and give to a dog’ which means ‘do fruitless work’/‘work hard for no

results' /'work hard and someone else takes the credit'

[3] excellent example of konglish slang: the word itself is 'cunning' transliterated into krn, but it means 'to cheat, cheating'.

[4] not 'normal' as in 'not unusual' but like 'normal person'/'ordinary person' so I'm assuming it means 'non-Hunter'

[5] lit. 'suffered 조리돌림 by the past public' where 조리돌림 is the noun form of the verb 조리돌리다, which the krn-eng dictionary I checked defines as 'drag/lead a malefactor through the streets to expose them to public shame'. So.

[6] the word for wage/pay used so far meant monthly pay fyi

[7] i'm assuming it's 5 thousand something (50 million perhaps? Krn counts in intervals of 4 digits instead of 3 like in eng, so it would most likely be 5 thousand ten-thousand) instead of just 5 thousand itself otherwise this makes no sense, but the raws just say this

[8] pyeong is a way of counting land space and 1 pyeong is apparently 3.3058 m² or 35.583 ft²

[9] lit. 'fur grows on conscience so much that it must be doubly, triply dense' where 'fur

grows on conscience' means that you betray/don't listen to your conscience

Chapter 19: < In Front of Kids >

"The S-Ranks that I've Raised" Translation Ch. 19

< In Front of Kids >

This time too, Kim Sunghan doubled as a driver and followed us. It was because Yerim obviously didn't and I also didn't have a driver's license. To be precise, this time period's me didn't. I got my license and bought a car when I managed to become a Hunter somehow, despite being F-Rank.

My baby[1] wouldn't be born yet. Should I buy the same type of car this time too?

As soon as we reached the apartment entrance, Yerim had a nervous appearance. Well, she was still only a young fifteen-year-old girl. Even if the relationship was bad, cutting off adult relatives who were taking care of you wouldn't be a comfortable thing to do.

Still, maybe thanks to the S-Rank Mental[2] stat, she pressed the elevator button without wavering. There also was no hesitation in selecting the floor.

It seemed like there wasn't much to worry over.

“It’s here.”

Yerim said, getting off at the 14th floor and then turning around after moving toward the righthand door.

“Even if that uncle of yours becomes unpleasant, you absolutely cannot deal with him. It becomes troublesome if a high-ranking Awakened Person touches a normal person. Even if you get mad, hold it in.”

But I was stat F, which wasn’t much different from a normal person, so it was okay. Yerim looked discontent but nodded her head.

After a last inspection, I stood in front of her and rung the doorbell. Shortly, we heard a middle-aged woman’s voice asking who it was.

“I am Bak Yerim-yang’s new guardian[3].”

[...What was that?]

Over the intercom, a small mumbling was heard. Well, it would be flustering. Soon after, the door opened.

A large man in his fifties, wearing loose shorts and a running outfit, stared at me with a

frown.

“This is our first time meeting. You are Bak Yerim-yang’s previous guardian, correct?”

I greeted him, smiling with a friendly voice. The man, Bak Yerim’s uncle Bak Sungtae, saw Yerim standing slightly behind and frowned even harder.

“What did this brat do! [4]”

My ears stung at the sudden shout. What a lovely voice.

“You should calm down.”

“Calm down, what calm down, where the hell did you come from, bastard!”

“I definitely just told you. I am Bak Yerim-yang’s new guardian.”

“...Guardian?”

At the word ‘guardian’, Bak Sungtae stopped. He was probably thinking of his hyung’s inheritance that he had snatched away.

“I’m that kid’s guardian, so guardian what guardian! Trying to scam someone!”

“It is not a scam. Please take a look.”

I took out the guardian contract for Awakened minors out of the purposefully prepared document bag and politely held it out. I had it officially filled out and authenticated when we went to the legal department.

Yerim hadn’t registered at the Association yet but was measured with Haeyeon Guild’s measuring instruments, and was guaranteed as an Awakened Person and even contracted as a Hunter, so legally, there was no problem.

You have to do these things properly.

“.....Awakened Person? That brat?”

What came over the face of the man who roughly scanned over the contract was no other than greed. It was good that he was easy to understand.

He goggled at Yerim.

“Awakened Person, I heard that they earn a lot of money.”

“It differs according to rank. However, that’s not what is important. Hunter minors have the same rights as adults so they can choose their guardians themselves. In other words, Bak Sungtae-ssi no longer has any responsibility or right as her guardian.”

Bak Sungtae didn’t understand right away and frowned.

“What are you talking about? I’m her guardian!”

“Not anymore.”

Understand already. How many times do I have to explain?

“What nonsense is that! [5] That brat is sixteen years old!”

“She is fifteen years old. By the special Hunter law, one has the same rights as an adult Hunter starting from fully [6] 14 years old. As Bak Yerim-yang’s birthday has passed, she is fully 14 years old.”

“Special law, what nonsense is that now? Anyways stop babbling crap and buzz off [7]! Yerim,

come here!”

He shoved me and tried to approach Yerim. But I didn’t budge one inch.

I knew this would happen and came wearing the leather gloves even though it was hot. If you’re going to come at me, then come on, now I’m Strength 24!

“This asshole...!”

When I, who was relatively smaller, wasn’t pushed even a bit, Bak Sungtae was shocked and stepped back. I blocked the door that was closing on its own with my foot, and lowered the doorstep.

“How could you suddenly hit someone? Please speak nicely.”

“H-hit, who hit someone! You asshole, so you’re an Awakened Person too! That, don’t you know that Awakened People can’t hit a normal citizen?!”

“I am indeed an Awakened Person, but I’m stat F, with not much difference from a normal person. And I have no intention of using anything like violence. In the first place, wasn’t it Bak Sungtae-ssi who hit me first?”

Right now, at this moment, I was a pacifist who emphasized ethics and morals. Look at this

virtuous smile of mine. Don't I seem good-natured?

"Since I have said this much, I trust that you understand that I am Bak Yerim-yang's guardian and Bak Sungtae-ssi is not."

I said, taking back the contract that Bak Sungtae was holding in his hand. Then, I took out the documents related to Yerim's inheritance.

"When I checked, it seems you have sold off all of the real estate from the inheritance that should be returned to Bak Yerim-yang."

When the talk of inheritance came up, Bak Sungtae's complexion became vicious.

"That was because it's too hard to manage... Yerim also agreed to it!"

He babbled well with a loose mouth.

"That would've been when she was a fifteen-year-old, no, a thirteen-year-old elementary school student."

"At any rate, agreement is agreement."

That guy said shamelessly. It was a little irritating.

“I am not convinced, but we are not here today for inheritance-related disputes, so I’ll return to the subject.”

I put away the inheritance documents that Bak Sungtae didn’t even cast a glance at, and this time, held out one memorandum.

“This is a memorandum saying that from now on, you will not approach or contract Bak Yerim-yang at all. Will you sign it?”

There probably wouldn’t be a legal effect but it would be enough to handle the media. Bak Sungtae scowled and spit out a curse.

“I sincerely raised her and now that she’s become an Awakened Person, you’re trying to take her away, this dick bastard[8]!”

The memo he smacked away fell to the floor. Behind me, I heard the sound of teeth grinding. Hang on for a little longer, Yerim.

“You seem like a very earnest caregiver, by your words at least. Even though that girl you raised sincerely is going around wearing worn out sneakers that don’t even fit her.”

I spoke, showing as much as possible that I was restraining my anger. Actually, I really was slowly getting angry so I didn't need to deliberately act it out.

"Th-that's! While we were raising the kids in poor circumstances, we let her wear handed down things like shoes..."

"So these days there are circumstances where you pocket several thousands of millions in inheritance and can't even buy one pair of shoes. Did the price rise a lot when I wasn't looking?"

New sneakers seemed to be 1 hundred million per pair. Did I come to the future instead of the past?

At my sarcasm, Bak Sungtae's face flushed blue and red.

"Still if you have a conscience, you should repay me for raising her! Is it right to just leave saying you'll live well by yourself!"

Wow, look at him making unreasonable demands. The thickness of his face must be about 1 meter.[9]

I deliberately sighed a deep breath. Then took out my wallet.

“In the end, put out some money, that’s what you’re saying.”

“No, that’s not exactly it...”

“This is a check for 1 hundred million.”

As soon as I took out the check, that guy’s eyes flickered up and down.

“That’s quite, with that small sum.....”

“This small sum, please remember that there is no reason to give it to you in the first place.
In the end, this is my investment for my guardee.”

Bak Sungtae, who was hesitating, picked up the memo that had fallen to the ground. His financial situation most likely should not be good. Just by briefly checking the copy of his register, I could see he had mortgage in units of hundred million.

After taking several thousands of millions and then ending up like that several years later, that 1 hundred million in front of his eyes must be lacking.

“...Give me a pen.”

“Here you go.”

We signed the memo and each took a copy.

“Then I hope there will be no reason for us to meet again.”

After saying so, I turned off the recording device. With just the conversation in the recorder, it was enough to feel like I had bowed my head and given money to a scoundrel.

That he pocketed the inheritance was recorded, that he was inhospitable to Yerim was recorded, and that he took money was all recorded. And I was very courteous.

It was perfect.

“What was that just now?”

Seeing me turn off the recorder, Bak Sungtae frowned. What do you mean, what.

“It’s a recording that I’ll use to bury you pull any crap.[10]”

“.....What?”

“There’s no way a bastard like you would shut his mouth with just 1 hundred million?”

“This bastard is craz-!”

Bam!

I pushed my palm again the face of the guy lunging at me and slammed him to the doorframe. As I kicked the falling body inside the entrance,

“Soochun’s dad[11]!”

A middle-aged woman peeking from the inner gate cried in a shrill voice.

“I don’t want to get rid of corpses so please be quiet. Isn’t it a nuisance to the neighborhood?”

Maybe the nextdoor neighbor had gone out for the weekend because it was quiet, but just in case. The middle-aged woman trembled and automatically nodded her head.

I was just going to finish with a warning but she was so afraid that I was a little

embarrassed.

I bent down and tapped Bak Sungtae's cheek. I might have hurt his head because there was a slight smell of blood. The guy grunted and opened his eyes.

"You should be careful, what would you do if your foot slips? If you hit your head wrong, you'll die straight away."

"What, what..."

"The apartment entrance is metal so it's dangerous in various ways. Like see here."

I pulled the arm of the sagging man and made him put his fingers on the doorframe. I lightly stepped on the hand that squirmed away, trying to evade.

"If you close the door wrong like this it gets cut off? It would be an unfortunate accident."

"W-wait a minute! I was wrong! I'll even give back the money!"

The eyes looking up at me were full of fear. He was still a normal person so did I go a little too far? Even just a little while ago, I must have seemed like a half-crazed bastard, hmm.

It won't do. I have to live well-behaved this time.

I straightened up and smiled widely.

"Ah, I apologize. I was too harsh, right? I won't bother you anymore so don't worry. Same in the future. As long as you don't put yourself forward, there definitely won't be any reason for us to meet. Don't be concerned and just live well like this."

1 hundred million unexpectedly appeared, how great is that.

"But if you get pointlessly greedy, I won't stop at a warning. I'll tweak the recording, and give some money to the press to socially ostracize you, and then force the inheritance you pocketed out of you. Oh right, you'll probably be short on money you owe. Then, I'll more or less force you to Awaken and give you over to work as a dungeon porter. Do you know? If you die in a dungeon, no one would know what happened."

When a dungeon was cleared, as it was reset, the corpses also vanished. If you just pretended that they were killed by monsters, it would be cleanly handled.

Whew, another unpleasant memory was about to surface. It became things that didn't happen so let's quickly forget.

"I-I'll live quietly! I'll keep quiet!"

"If you do that much, then thank you. Now please stand up."

Stop bowing your head, making someone embarrassed.

Considering it more or less finished, I turned to Yerim. But the kid staring at me had a strange expression.

.....Maybe it really was excessive. He was still the uncle she lived with, and I hurt his head and threatened to cut off his fingers, so it was enough for her to look at me weirdly. It wouldn't do for our relationship break down.

"Hey, Yerim."

"Ahjussi, are you okay?"

"...Huh?"

Yerim spoke, coming towards me.

"You're not hurt anywhere?"

.....I think you've got the wrong person. The one beating someone up was me, so what was she saying?

[1] this is a word that means 'favorite horse' but obviously we're beyond horse-riding days as normal transportation, so people use it to refer to their favorite/beloved car, the way ppl might call their car their 'baby' or other such endearments

[2] the word used for this stat means 'mental power' or 'willpower'

[3] again, the word used is different from the 'guardian' in the next dialogue sentence, where the one YJ uses for himself is more of a 'financial backer' and the one for the uncle is the general word you use when talking about a kid/minor's guardian. I'm starting to think maybe I should've used different words for these I don't think this issue will be dragged out so just keep in mind that YJ is always the first type of guardian and the uncle is the second type

[4] lit. 'where did this girl do what [nonsense]' where [nonsense] is implied because the actual word used is 'act' but it's only used in a negative connotation, and the word for 'that girl' (which I'm tl-ing as 'brat in this ch) has a negative/derogatory connotation, but I don't think it's the point to 'bitch' or 'cunt' or any other female-targeted swears in eng

[5] lit. 'where is that kind of thing'. The uncle doesn't really say 'nonsense' either here or in his next dialogue line but it was the best way to express what he was saying, since tl-ing word for word doesn't really make sense for a lot of the exclamations he's using

[6] again, this means 14yo in western age. For details, see footnote [17] of ch. 12

[7] it feels kinda weird using this phrase bc it's not really something ppl actually say irl (in my experience) but using 'fuck off' sounded too harsh, and 'beat it' was equally weird, so...

[8] swear words don't really tl literally but this time it matches up since the raws said 'dick-like [word I've been tl-ing as bastard]'

[9] referencing the idea of being 'thick skinned'/'having a thick face', i.e. shameless, brazen

[10] YJ stops speaking politely and starts using casual speech, as well as using 네놈 in this sentence, which is a rude way of saying 'you'

[11] it's normal for middle-aged ppl to call each other '[eldest child]'s mom/dad', including ppl who are married to each other

Chapter 20: < Can't Even Drink Cold Water >

"The S-Ranks that I've Raised" Translation Ch. 20

< Can't Even Drink Cold Water >

“You were trying to talk nicely but uncle tried to use violence twice, I was really alarmed, did you know?”

“Uh... mm, you were?”

It was true Bak Sungtae attacked twice, but. It couldn't be that she didn't see me hit her uncle's head against the door frame.

“Don't do this from now on. It makes me too anxious to watch.”

Yerim complained. I mean[1], was there anything to be anxious over in that situation? Wasn't it one-sided? Was there something wrong with her eyes?

“.....Anyways, the situation is handled so go pack your things and come back.”

“Yes~.”

Yerim passed me and went through the entrance. During that time, Bak Sungtae had gotten his wife's help and was standing up. When she saw him, the corners of Yerim's eyes wrinkled a little.

“You too, uncle, be a little more careful. Slipping on your feet.”

At the nonchalant voice, the faces of Bak Sungtae and his wife became dazed. Following suit, I was also a little shocked. I did make that kind of excuse, but...

“You, you! Didn’t you just see!”

At Bak Sungtae’s wronged shout, Yerim shrugged her shoulders.

“I’m saying so because I saw. Or, are you trying to slander my[2] ahjussi?”

“What? Slander?!”

“Yerim, you, what way of speaking is that!”

“Why, aunt[3]? You saw it too. Uncle fell on his own and hit his head.”

At the cold words, Bak Sungtae and his wife looked like they were speechless. What should I do? Should I just leave it alone, or should I say something?

“How could you say something like that! Look at the blood from your uncle’s head! Just then that man-.”

“Aunt.”

The even colder voice continued on.

“It was that uncle slipped.”

“N-no...”

“You keep on lying. Not understanding after being told this much.”

Yerim took out a fancy long umbrella from the umbrella stand. Bak Sungtae and his wife flinched reflexively.

“A while ago, I said that I needed a strong umbrella like Soochun did. Do you remember? Last year when there was a typhoon, the plastic umbrella you gave me turned inside out and was broken. But you said you couldn’t give me another umbrella, that it was my responsibility for breaking it, so during the entire rainy season I went around covered with a big plastic bag I picked up.”

...Something like that happened? Wasn’t that abuse?

"I don't really care about that anymore. There were a lot of other things too, but I decided to let it go. There was no point in caring. It was too trivial."

The pale and smooth two hands tilted the umbrella horizontally.

"Please remember that. That it's because it's trivial. So stay like that, trivially. If you don't, and pick a fight with my ahjussi over things that I alone let slide."

Too-dook

The umbrella was folded in half. That much, a strong adult man could do. But then, that already folded in half was,

Too-doo-dook

Folded in half again. Then, like it was compressed by a large press, it was crushed. Maybe because of the backdrop of the apartment entrance, the sight of her delicate two hands crumpling the umbrella like it was rubber clay seemed unreal, despite knowing she was an Awakened Person.

Since it was like that to me, it must have been even more so to those people.

Took, daegooreu[4]

The crushed lump that you couldn't tell the original shape of was lightly thrown.

The gazes of Bak Sungtae and his wife were fixed to it, which had fallen and was rolling on the floor.

"So... uh, I won't let it go."

Yerim finished speaking awkwardly. It seemed like she couldn't think of a good threat to end on. But it was enough to have an effect on that couple.

Yerim turned to look at me and laughed 'ehehe'.

"This is harder than I'd thought. But it was okay, right?"

Okay or not, she couldn't have been copying me, right? Insisting that she alone let it go, and acting like she would nicely leave things be and then showing off her strength, and saying that she would close her eyes to past events, all of it was similar.

...So this was why they said you can't even drink cold water in front of kids[5]. Old sayings really weren't wrong.

“.....You said you were a good kid.”

“Ahjussi too. If you act good here, then it's not being good, it's being a pushover.”

She wasn't wrong. Well, if she was going to live as a combat Hunter, not any other type, rather than being yielding, it would be better to have a strong side.

Somewhat nodding my head, I glanced at Bak Sungtae and his wife. They seemed like their souls had left. So why didn't you be a little kind to the kid? Still, besides the embezzling, all their limbs were okay and they got some money, so there shouldn't be any disadvantage. Did they collect a lot of good fortune in their previous lives?

“Let's just do this much and leave. Do you have a lot to pack? Should I help?”

“No, I don't have much. For things like clothes, it'll probably be better to buy new ones.”

My attention went to the shabby sneakers again. Now that I think of it, her clothes were a tracksuit.

“I'll buy you a pair of new shoes. Ones that fit.”

Yerim smiled widely. It was a bright[6] and pretty smile.

“It’s not too much? Your pay is 0 won.”

Cutting to the heart[7] with a smiling face.

“I said I have money. Did you think I just played around to this age, when I haven’t even gone to college? I have money I’ve saved.”

“Okay. Then I’ll buy lunch.”

“You haven’t opened a bank account yet so you don’t have money. Since it’s Sunday, the bank isn’t open either.”

The down payment was scheduled to be deposited when the bank account was opened.

“Th-then tomorrow! Tomorrow right away when the bank opens! I’ll buy from an expensive place.”

“I’ll wait for it.”

Yerim excitedly entered the home. If it weren’t for the people sprawled out around the

entrance, it would have been quite a nice scene.

Bam!

We loaded the luggage into the car trunk and got on the backseats. While nodding along to Yerim, who was excited about being completely emancipated, I took out a mana potion from the inventory.

“What is that?”

Yerim, who saw the 100 mL drink bottle, tilted her head and asked.

“Apple-flavored mana potion.”

There was also orange-flavored.

“Mana potion? It looks like a restorative drink from the drugstore.”

“Appearances aside, it’s all made from dungeon side-products, including the bottle. So if you take the empty bottle to the Association, you get points that you can use in the Hunter shopping mall.”

It was because if you put it in a normal bottle, you wouldn't be able to put it in the inventory. The collection rate of empty bottles was low so there was even a recycling campaign targeted toward mid-to-high rank Hunters.

Of course, I was an F-Rank Hunter that need to save every cent so I regularly brought them in.

"Are there vitality potions too?"

"Of course. Should I show you?"

"Yes."

I took out a vitality potion that looked exactly the same and was only different in color, and held it out. Taking it, Yerim looked fascinated as she inspected it.

"If you drink this, do you really get better and such?"

"It's the lowest grade so the effect isn't that good. It's enough to staunch bleeding when you spray it on wounds, rather than drinking it."

“Oh, so it only staunches bleeding?”

“Stopping blood immediately when you put it on is pretty useful, you know. And even if it’s only that much, they’re around ten times as expensive as mana potions of the same rank.”

Yerim’s eyes became round.

“Not the other way around?”

“Mana potions are factory-made from finely ground magic stones, but vitality potions are handmade products from healers. At that, fixing skill effects to liquids is difficult so at best only up to mid-grade can be made, and you can only get high-rank vitality potions or things like elixirs through dungeon awards.”

Especially elixirs were extremely precious things that you couldn’t get several out of even S-Rank dungeons. I opened the mana potion and drank as I explained.

I kept on using Auspicious Seed-Leaf just in case, so my mana was low. The results were uninteresting and the best stat rank was a delivery man’s C. The skills were only D.

Discovering Yoo Myeongwoo was an incredibly lucky case, and usually it was like this. Far from S-Rank, even B-Ranks were in the minority.

'It would do with just Yerim but... it would be pretty good if there was a healer.'

Did they say that a human's greed has no bounds? After getting a combat power, I wanted a healer. Were there any S-Rank, no even an A-Rank, healers lying around? Then, I really wouldn't need anything else.

'Healers that became famous in the future were all foreigners so I wouldn't be able to find them.'

For some reason, within the country, only up to B-Rank healers appeared. Even Haeyeon Guild endured with a B-Rank before finally recruiting over a foreign Hunter.

Still there shouldn't be none at all; should I sit down somewhere where a lot of people go in and out[8] and look around?

After buying necessary items starting from shoes and clothes, and eating lunch, we returned to the guild. Bak Yerim looked sorry and like she didn't know what to do, every time I opened my wallet.

Even though we didn't buy anything expensive and this much was okay.

"I really will pay you back!"

“I said it’s okay.”

On the way, I checked my bank balance at an ATM, and it was more than I had expected. Even leaving aside the money to buy stocks, it was enough to live on for about a year, so there was no problem. Well, room and board, which used up the most money, was going to be free. Not to mention, I didn’t have to go to work so there would be no transportation fees, and besides cell phone fees, fees for communication, gas, electricity, etc. were all no charge.

My dissatisfaction over my salary being 0 won was starting to die down.

That decreasing dissatisfaction completely vanished as I was ushered into high-level A-Rank Hunter exclusive dorms.

“Daily necessities and food are provided by the 15th floor dorm maintenance through phone or written request, up to a limit of 1 million won per month.”

The female employee who was in charge of guiding me to the dorms smiled prettily and said.

“Excuse me? Those kinds of things are given too?”

“Going to buy those yourselves would be inconvenient, and it is in case a quarantine is needed. The limit can be raised with your personal money.”

A-Rank were treated really well, huh. Then again, how much profit did they create? It was enough that you'd carefully look after them in case they got in trouble[9].

"Cleaning and laundry services are usually twice a week, and for trash, please separate into dry trash and wet trash and throw them away into the hallway chute. Of course, you can employ a housekeeper with your personal money."

So they even do cleaning and laundry? Coming someplace like here and asking for pay on top of that – I was being a thief. I had only been in two-people one-room company housing, so I had thought they would give a big single-household place with free utility at best. That they would give this much service...[10]

"Here is unit A-15 that has been assigned to Han Yoojin-nim. It is scheduled for Bak Yerim-nim to move into unit A-16 nextdoor."

Yerim had to receive coordination[11] for going to the Hunter Association tomorrow and didn't come up with me. They were going to dress her up in a way that suited, of course her appearance, but also her personality and skills, and even the Hunter characteristic. S-Ranks outshone[12] reasonably famous[13] celebs, so this was needed.

...Did Yoohyun go through things like that? He did go around wearing nice clothes.

The employee took out a card key and opened the door. And then she handed the key to me.

“Only one card key is provided, so if you want cleaning when you are out, you can entrust it with maintenance. Through the current security system initialization, if you register your fingerprint and a password, you can enter without the card key.”

I took the card key and went inside. The first thing I saw was a living room that was decked out like a high-class hotel or a model house. The sunlight that shone through the whole glass window blinded me.

“For any other usage explanations and precautions, please refer to this booklet. The pen and secure facility for the Horned Flame Lion is scheduled to be installed on Monday. Until then, please do not bring it down to the dorms.”

“Yes, I understand.”

“And, for safety, a door through to unit A-16 has been placed.”

“...Excuse me?”

I mean, I did contract to be protected but wasn't this much unnecessary? What about my privacy?

“.....It can be locked, right?”

“From unit A-16, it can.”

The female employee said, as if saying something obvious. Then what about me? I guess I should go buy a chain from the hardware store and put it up at least.

“Urghh, I’m tired.”

As soon as the employee left and I was alone, I flopped onto the sofa. I was going to relax after regressing, but somehow, I ran around busily.

But now I had more or less found my place.

‘I won’t have anything to worry about in the future since there is no time limit on being provided A-Rank dorms.’

Unless dungeons suddenly disappeared and Awakening abilities went away. ...I should put away life savings in the end. Them appearing was sudden anyways, so you’d never know.

After lying down like that for a bit, I slowly took out my cell phone. The newcomer Hunter

training date was set so I should contact him. He wouldn't have had any bad thoughts during this time, right?

After several rings, Yoo Myeongwoo picked up the phone.

"Hel-."

[The owner of this cell phone can't answer the phone right now.]

Huh? It wasn't Yoo Myeongwoo's voice? And the call was cut off. What, why can't my[15] precious SS-Rank production skill answer the phone?

[1] I can't remember if I remembered to footnote this previously but anyways it's actually 'no', but that's used as a colloquial interjection sort of thing & the best eng equiv that I could think of was 'I mean' even though that's not exactly what it means

[2] she uses 'our' actually, which, like I mentioned previously, is a lot more common in krn than in eng. I thought using 'our' here would make it sound like she was implying a 'we' that included her uncle, so I used 'my' instead

[3] what you call the wife of your father's younger brother

[4] thud-like noise, then a rolling noise I think

[5] a saying that you say after you do sth, to imply that kids would copy what you just did.
Yes, the previous ch title and this ch title together makes this saying.

[6] lit. 'without a single wrinkle' which can be used literally or metaphorically

[7] lit. 'pierce the bone', but that and other variations of bone hurty mean 'agonizing'. I guess I could've used 'cut to the bone' but I couldn't remember if that eng phrase also meant the same thing as 'cut to the heart' (bc apparently I also suck at my one (1) fluent language) bc when I googled to check, google said it meant 'severely reduced'

[8] lit. 'a space with a large transient population'

[9] lit. 'carefully look at them in case they eat something wrong and trouble happens'

[10] actually there is no '...' but I couldn't think of a different way to express the general feeling of the sentence other than this, so.

[11] this is the eng word transliterated into krn, and, I think in this case, another ex. of konglish slang. I know in the entertainment industry, the stylists and fashion coordinators and what they do are called 'coordi' (shortened vers of the eng word) so I'm assuming it's something like that, esp based on the context of the next sentence. So it probably means something like 'styling'.

[12] lit. 'hit (someone's) cheek'

[13] it doesn't actually say 'famous', just lit. 'reasonable/quite/a fair amount celeb' but that doesn't make sense in eng

[14] in this case, YJ does say 'my' instead of 'our'. Idk how to explain the differences/nuances between 'my' and 'our' bc it's all very vague/instinctive to me, so... uh... yeah...

Chapter 21: < My Person (1) >

< My Person (1) >

'It was definitely a man's voice.'

And it was a harsh and rough tone too. I bolted up and sat straight in my seat.

'What did he say at that time... After coming out of a so-so college, he was in debt, I think he said something like that.'

Did he mean it wasn't from borrowing for tuition? And thinking of the call just now and the attempted suicide, I came to a common conclusion. So he took out a private loan.

Fuck, it wouldn't be that the SS-Rank production skill died and couldn't be revealed to the

world, right? Even if he borrowed a lot of money, and didn't repay it, uh, was it an easy thing to kill someone? They probably just beat him up.

Although an accident where you die or become crippled[1] could occur.

'.....Shit.'

With an urgent heart, I called Yoo Myeongwoo, called the man whose name I didn't know, again.

"Pick up, bastard!"

If it's money, I'll pay it instead so pick up already! Do you know how much he's worth! But there was no answer on the other side of the cell phone.

"Damn, what should I do?"

I didn't even know where he was so I couldn't find him. Immediately, I wondered if I had to do that much.

Losing Yoo Myeongwoo would be an incredible waste. But truthfully speaking, he wasn't strictly necessary now. I had prepared a solid enough footing to live well off of, and didn't need to receive something like the incentive.

So even if I acted like I didn't know, there wouldn't really be a huge problem, but. There was no need for me to handle Yoo Myeongwoo's mistakes, but.

".....He's someone who would be able to live well without being jealous of others if he gets the skill."

I remembered the face that was stained with tears. I thought of the despairing voice that talked about completely losing his own worth. As well as the crappy[2] 5 years that were my past as well as the future.

"It can't be helped."

I sighed once and picked up the cell phone I had thrown onto the sofa.

Anyone would have thought like that at least once. Can it be that I'm special? Can it be that anyone could see the specialness that I myself don't know and tell me? And can it be that my life will change completely for the better?

In the reality where Awakened People appeared, that type of thing wasn't a naive fantasy. Can it be that I suddenly Awaken as a S-Rank Awakened Person, or at least A-Rank? Though, at the same time, it was a futile dream that had an extremely low possibility of occurring.

But Yoo Myeongwoo had me.

The sole person who told him, who had fallen all the way to rock bottom, that he was special, who could really make him special.

‘So, what else can I do? I know that rock bottom and I also know that hope.’

I had also hoped and failed and was discouraged. Without a helpful hand.

I put in the phone number from my memory. It was 2 years later when I met that guy. But he was working 3 years before we knew each other, and I never saw him change his phone number, so it would probably still be the same.

After ringing, that guy picked up the phone.

[Hello, this is Hamster[3] Detective Agency!]

A cheerful voice was heard. He was still the same. But what was with this detective agency name.

“Is this Do Hamin-ssi?”

[Yes! This is the head of Hamster Detective Agency, Do Hamin.]

“I want to find one person, is that possible?”

[Of course, it is possible. As long as we have their name, description, and cell phone number that has been used for over 1 year, anyone and quickly! We can find them. Besides just the number, if the cell phone itself was used for over 1 year, then a fast investigation is possible~.]

The chattering voice spoke, full of confidence. With just one glance at Yoo Myeongwoo’s cell phone, it seemed like it was used easily over 1 year, so it would probably be okay.

Do Hamin was a kind of information dealer. He was especially good at finding people, and I didn’t know what skill he had but he could track someone’s location straight away with their appearance and a serial number exceeding six digits of something they had possessed for over 1 year.

At first, that is, right now, he was someone who was only doing background checks at the detective agency. Then, his ability was so exceptional that word got out, and at the end of all sorts of trouble, he became an information dealer in the Hunter community.

There were a lot of Hunters who were bothered by Do Hamin even while buying information from him. I was also really annoyed, changing my cell phone and cards, from my ID card to my Hunter license, every year after getting involved with that guy.

[If you deposit into the bank account I just texted, I can find them right away!]

Do Hamin said, after receiving Yoo Myeongwoo's phone number, name, and description.

Ack, I haven't been to the bank yet.

"...Can I pay by card by any chance?"

[Yes, I will send you the link. There is an additional 10% commission charge.]

This tax evader. Soon after paying, Yoo Myeongwoo's current location was sent via text. As fast as always.

'Now what should I do?'

Yoo Myeongwoo's location was a junk shop called 'Hope Resources'. He probably wouldn't have sold his cell phone to the junk shop, and it seemed like it really was some shady place.

'A D-Rank or higher Awakened Person wouldn't be moneylending at a junk shop, right?'

Though, if the other person's level was low, I could deal with up to D-Rank with my items.

For now, I stood from the sofa. The probability of the other person being a normal person was higher so it would be better for me to handle it.

The problem was if I went out alone, Yoohyun might kick up a fuss.

‘It would be a little weird[4] to take Yerim.’

After labelling myself as her guardian, continuously showing immoral scenes to the kid would be a bad thing to do.

For now, I went outside and down to the building lobby. I stood near the entrance that had a considerable number of people going in and out despite it being the weekend, and called Kim Sunghan.

[What is it.]

“I’m going to go out for a short while, but I thought I should at least let you know. If you’re busy, you don’t need to come out. I’m already at the lobby. There are a lot of taxis in front of here, and would there be any mishaps? Yoohyun might get angry but-.”

With a thump[5], the call was ended. Would it take several minutes for him to come? There were a lot of eyes so if he tried to drag me in, I would yell.

Shortly, I heard heavy striding footsteps coming closer.

“Han Yoojin-ssi.”

At the voice that was suppressing anger, I smiled bright and turned around. You shouldn’t spit on a smiling face.

“You came quickly. I could go alone, so I’m really sorry to bother you so.”

This was all due to the nitpicking of that guy you follow wholeheartedly, Yoohyun, so don’t complain to me.

Kim Sunghan took a deep breath and then turned his body.

“Please follow me.”

“To where?”

“Of course, to the parking lot.”

Ah, what was going on? I thought he would say something for sure, but he was too agreeable. He wouldn’t pretend to go to the parking lot and then grab and throw me into

the elevator going up, right?

Just in case, I put some distance between us and followed, but Kim Sunghan went straight to the parking lot without turning around even once. Hmm, it was convenient but it was suspicious.

“Where are you going?”

Kim Sunghan asked, opening the car door. After seeing the A-Rank dorm treatment, it was a little uncomfortable to put him in the role of chauffeur.

“Myeonmok-dong[6] Hope Resources.”

I’ll quickly get my driver’s license so I’ll have to bother you for a little while longer[7].

Hope Resources was a shabby 2-floor building located in a secluded place. The clean sign, that looked less than several months old, was awkward against the wall that showed its age.

“Can you go alone?”

Kim Sunghan asked, seeing me put on the leathers gloves before I left the car.

“There’s probably only going to be normal people, so it would be better for me to go alone. If they pointlessly nitpick, it’ll be annoying, so please wait in the car.”

If it was someone like Kim Sunghan, the possibility of someone recognizing him was high. And I wanted to resolve it nicely through words if possible.

Going toward the building entrance, I called Yoo Myeongwoo again. He didn’t pick up, and there was no bell sound either. Though it might’ve been on vibrate.

‘Normally, it would be the basement or 2nd floor.’

The glass door was covered in a white film that said Hope Resources in big letters, so I couldn’t see inside. I said I didn’t need help, but just in case, should I have a safeguard?

The door was locked so I rung the bell next to it. Having the door locked despite being a shop and having an intercom with a camera, it seemed pretty shady.

[We’re closed.]

I had to ring the bell two more times before a curt reply came. In case[8] the other person wouldn’t hear, I quickly spoke.

"I came to pay back money!"

I said I came to give money so would there be anyone who would reject? As expected, I soon heard footsteps coming closer and the door's lock was unfastened.

"It's been a while since someone came to pay on their own."

A large man muttered as he opened the door. I was wondering, but it seemed like it really was a loan shark. And... it seemed like my prediction was slightly wrong.

It didn't seem like it would become a big problem so I put on a smile that insisted I was harmless and went inside. Despite being a junk shop, the 1st floor was neat and clean.

"Follow me."

The man took the lead and walked toward the stairs.

"It is the 2nd floor?"

After purposely speaking loudly, I followed him up and saw a crude iron door that didn't suit the interior. When the door opened, there was an outwardly normal-looking reception room.

Including the guy who came up with me, F, F, F, E, D. And sitting on the sofa was Yoo Myeongwoo with a forced smile.

“Huh? Myeongwoo.”

Wow, imagine seeing you here. As soon as I acted like I knew him, those guys, including Yoo Myeongwoo, turned to look at me.

“...Han Yoojin?”

“What, you know each other?”

The D sitting on the sofa opposite to Yoo Myeongwoo asked.

“We were friends when we were kids, and met a few days ago in front of the Hunter Association.”

“Association? You’re an Awakened Person, too?”

“Yes. I’m just an F-Rank, though.”

“FF?”

“I’m FE. Thankfully I qualify to be a Hunter.”

At my words, D laughed beamingly, pretending to be nice. Then F2 came closer and added, pretending to be friendly.

“You’re a young man with a bright future, huh? Your name is Han Yoojin? Just now we were going to introduce an easy job that makes good money to your friend, do you want to join in?”

“A job?”

“That’s right. Your friend already contracted.”

Did he already sign? Were these bastards trying to intercept someone else’s hard work? I was actually getting angry.

If it was a normal contract, then it wouldn’t matter, but if it was a Hunter-use contract, especially an illegal one, then it would get troublesome. Before I knocked things over, I guess I should check it carefully first.

“Can I also hear about it?”

“Of course! Here, here, sit down.”

Thinking they caught a pushover, they even friendlyly handed over coffee. Of course, it was an instant mix in a paper cup.

As I sat down next to him, Yoo Myeongwoo sneaked a peek at me anxiously. It seemed like he wanted to say something but his mouth wouldn't open due to fear. It's okay, so just sit there quietly.

“Our friend, when did you Awaken?”

D asked.

“On Friday. It's only been few days.”

“Then you probably don't know much. This Hunter community, you know, isn't an easy neighborhood. For an F-Rank, it's hard to go around a dungeon, and it's close to impossible to get into a guild.”

“Is that true? But they say you make a lot of money if you become a Hunter...”

“To make a lot of money, you have to be E at least, and they don’t really let F’s into parties.”

I put on an expression like I was hearing this for the first time in my life. Then, I gave a big sigh.

“I was happy because they said I was qualified to be a Hunter, it looks like I counted my chickens before they hatched[9].”

“Haha, does the world work that easily? But you don’t have to worry. I specially! Will put just you into a guild!”

“A guild?”

“That’s right, a guild! Basically, I mean we will specially let you join our Hope Resources Guild. The guild leader is C-Rank and I, the vice guild leader, am D-Rank.”

“Wow, you are a D-Rank? Are all the people here all Hunters?”

“Of course. Hey, bring over a contract.”

F2 put a contract on top of the table. Thankfully, it was a normal contract.

“The conditions are simple. Instead of the little F-Rank dungeons that don’t even make money, we’ll send you into no less than D-Ranks. Of course, our guild’s combat Hunters will handle the monsters, you and your friend only need to take care of the byproducts in this really easy, money-making job!”

“Ah, is that so.”

So this was a mine worker contract.

Among dungeons, there was one called collection-type. It had a natural environment where useful flora and fauna lived, or a mining environment where minerals could be dug up, etc.

But usually, rather than collecting byproducts, magic stones and rewards from monsters had a lot more worth so if a Hunter had a certain amount of abilities, they didn’t do any collecting activities.

Of course, F-Ranks with low levels and no equipment could at least dig those up and sell them for good profit but collection-types that made money were D-Rank dungeons and higher.

So there were crappy guilds that pushed F-Ranks ‘miners’ into D-Rank collection-type dungeons. While official guild members hunted, the miners collected.

Miners, who had low ranks and levels and didn’t have any equipment, were frequently hurt

or killed by attacks from monsters that weren't handled yet. There wasn't any compensation related to that of course and 70-80% of the collect byproducts were taken by the guild as a commission fee and barely a protection fee.

"Do you see here? As long as you join the guild, you can go into a D-Rank dungeon with D-Rank Hunters right away! And then you just have to pick and gather things that make money! It's totally a piece of cake[10]. Getting only 20% might seem like a little but if you think of the dungeon bidding fee and supplying the D-Rank Hunters' equipment, it's definitely! Not little!"

"So you're saying I just have to pick up things?"

"Of course, of course. You just have to stamp here. Thumbprints are good too."

I put down the contract that I was holding, with an extremely enthralled expression.

"Can I check just one more thing?"

"Just ask."

"The contract conditions seem good, but just in case, I want to compare it with Myeongwoo's contract. My conditions might be lower. Since usually, the conditions of the person who came before are better."

At my words, D laughed loudly.

“Hey, this friend is thorough! Of course you can! Check to your heart’s content and then sign.”

These guys had no structure, just showing off others’ contracts. F3 took Yoo Myeongwoo’s contract out of a vault and brought it over. It was also a contract on normal paper. Looking at that, there was no need to record this. Good, there was nothing to be hindered by.

I took Yoo Myeongwoo’s contract, and then ripped it lengthwise.

[1] this word can be used neutrally (I think) to mean ‘someone who is handicapped/disabled’, since that’s the original meaning, but it’s also used a lot as an (ableist) insult/slur, the way ‘r*tard’ or ‘cr*pplē’ is in eng, so yeah >:/ I’ve seen it tl’d a lot as ‘fool’ or ‘idiot’, but that would be glossing over the insensitivity of the background of this word. I wasn’t sure if I should put it outright in the tl, but figured it would be censorship on my part if I didn’t, so I compromised and used ‘become crippled’ instead of ‘become a cr*pplē’, since to my knowledge, the verb is okay while the noun is a slur. If I’m wrong about the verb being okay to use, then please let me know!

[2] lit. ‘like yeot’ where yeot is a type of krn taffy. Idk why ‘like yeot’ and ‘eat yeot’ became something bad when yeot is just a type of traditional confectionary but languages be like that

[3] idk if this is relevant but the word is the eng one transliterated into krn, tho I think that's a common way (using the eng word, I mean) of referring to hamsters anyways

[4] lit. 'a little like that' which doesn't make as much sense in eng, so I tweaked it

[5] it's not that there was a thump over the phone, but the sound used here is, among other things, used when describing the sound of hanging up a phone call. It's to imply that KSH hung up on YJ but the sentence doesn't tl as well in eng.

[6] I don't think I mentioned in prev. ch.s but '-dong' in place names means 'district'

[7] the 2nd half of this sentence is that 'I request' polite phrase again, but I thought this particular tl sounded better and brought out the meaning better in this particular case

[8] Either there is the typo in the text & the author meant '세라' instead of '새라' (both pronounced the same but the 2nd word, i.e. the one the author used, has no meaning), or I'm missing something here, but I'm like 90% it was a spelling typo

[9] lit. 'just drank kimchi soup' from the saying 'don't drink kimchi soup first' or 'people who get rice cakes don't even dream but (you) drink kimchi soup first'

[10] lit. 'lying down and eating rice cake'

Chapter 22: < My Person (2) >

< My Person (2) >

“What is this!”

“This crazy bastard?!”

F3 lunged to snatch away the contract. I stretched my leg out and kicked his ankle, and then grabbed his body that was falling forward and,

Bam!

I slammed him onto the table. Wow, the glass was strong.

“Yoo-Yoojin!”

Extremely shocked, Yoo Myeongwoo faltered and rose from his seat. D also kicked the sofa and put on a menacing frown.

“So this bastard isn’t an F-Rank! Looks like level 1, probably E-Rank? Fuck, I’ll cut off your finger and make you sign your thumbprint!”

D spit out in savage voice. Thanks to my items, I was higher than him, but I didn't want to get rid of corpses so I used less strength.

I stood up as if to protect Yoo Myeongwoo from behind and took out my cell phone. D and the other guys sneered at me.

"Even if you reported it now, it'd be too la-."

"Come in."

Bam-!

With a loud noise, the locked iron door crumpled in half and fell.

I wasn't making a call, but rather ending one. I pressed the end button for the call to Kim Sunghan and smiled, going toward him, who was standing in front of the door.

"Can I ask for a favor?"

It wouldn't be a problem for me alone, but there was someone who could protect me.

So before I rung the bell, I called Kim Sunghan. Even if the opponents were normal people,

to please come in if it became dangerous. Rather than something going wrong with Yoo Myeongwoo, it would be better to risk a little danger and hushing them up with destruction of evidence.

But since all of them were Hunters, it was a thankful thing.

“You had a companion!”

D yelled as if to stimulate the spirit.

“I might seem like a reasonable guy but I-!”

“That face! I-isn’t that Kim Sunghan? Haeyeon Guild’s shield!”

Cutting off D’s words, F1 pointed with a frightened expression.

“A-Rank, that guy, I mean, that person is an A-Rank!”

A-Rank. At that one sentence, the atmosphere became chilly. From the D-Rank, the E, F, F, F, were all taken aback and looked around.

Kim Sunghan, who had completely controlled the atmosphere with his certified face,

twitched his eyebrows[1].

“Kneel.”

Thump, thump.

Five pairs of knees hit the floor simultaneously. They listened well.

“How should I deal with them?”

Kim Sunghan asked me. Why did he ask? He had a much higher rank than me so he could figure out how to deal with them on his own. Did he only get orders from being directly under Yoohyun, so that was what he was used to?

“Hm, usually in these cases, you’d go with tooth for a tooth, eye for an eye. We can just give the same treatment back to them, right?”

If we left things as is, they were guys who would swallow up innocent F-Ranks’ lives like Venus flytraps. There was no point in leniently letting things go.

I took out my one remaining S-Rank-use contract from the inventory. It was as much as over 20 million won, so it felt like a waste, but I didn’t buy it with my own money and I could say it was to cover Yoo Myeongwoo’s debt.

“So... D-Rank over there, what’s your name?”

I used Seed-Leaf so I knew, but I couldn’t show that I did.

“...It is Kim Duksoo.”

That guy answered bitterly. He immediately kneeled in front of an A-Rank, but it seemed like he didn’t like an F-Rank speaking informally to him. I was the one who took action[2], he really didn’t have any sense.

“Kim Duksoo. You have to reply truthfully to what I ask. If you lie, I’ll cut off one finger each time. There’s no need to sign with a thumbprint, so should I shove them down your throat?”

I said, shoving the contract and pen in front of that guy’s eyes.

“Write down your skills and sign.”

“Th-this is...”

“It’s a S-Rank-use contract. Write down your skills with effects that can be definitely be seen

by eye. If you lie and your skills get sealed, I'll cut off your fingers and you'll sign the next contract. I have enough, with all sorts of types, that your toes can be cut off too, so don't worry."

In reality, I only had one, but how could that guy know my inventory's matters?

Kim Duksoo swallowed dryly and wrote down his skills and signed. I should get some cheaper contracts. Did it make sense to use this as a lie detector? Of course, having no cause to use it would be best.

"How many guild members are there? Count only the official guild members."

"...There are eleven."

Even as a guild with a C-Rank guild leader, there wasn't a lot. Then again, it was a trash guild that took advantage of F-Ranks, so there was no reason for the size to be big.

"One is the C-Rank guild leader, what about the other five?"

"They are D-Rank."

"Call out their phone numbers."

If I let them directly call, they could pull some crap so I used that guy's cell phone to call them. After throwing the bait that I was a newly contracted F-Rank and that Kim Duksoo and company were having a hard time holding onto a skill C-Rank healer that they hooked with good luck, the answer that they would come quickly came.

"Where is the healer!"

Soon, the C-Rank guild leader, who ran in, was.

Bam!

"Kuk!"

Slumped over with one blow of Kim Sunghan's fist. Stat definitely was a bully.

Then the five D-Ranks were added and the total eleven strong young men were kneeling in a row. The room became cramped.

"Do you think there will be a C-Rank dungeon we can throw these guys in?"

At my words, their faces became pale. With merely one C-Rank, even if they went into a low

level C-Rank dungeon, several would die. But why would I care. Those guys did the same thing.

The number of contracts in the vault were over thirty. Among them, people with intact limbs didn't even reach half. Crazy assholes.

"I will contact the guild and try to find out."

"I was thinking of an individually owned dungeon, is it okay for the guild to be involved?"

Instead of breaking away individually, if the guild moved directly, it could become a factor for receiving criticism. Since it was executing after judging on our own instead of punishing lawfully.

"This much can be cleanly handled."

"Even so, there's no need for making a weakpoint over something that isn't a big deal. Hm, it would be better to hand it over to the Association instead of the guild."

At my words, Kim Sunghan's expression became subtle.

"If the writers insist that it was through a reasonable contract, at most they will finish with stripping them of their licenses."

“That is if we only report it, without taking any action.”

I brought over empty contracts and modified the 10-year contracts into 50 years for the Hope Resources Guild to the Hunter Association. Beyond that, it was completely a slave contract so there was no need to deal with them.

No, I should change the ratio to 1:9 too. Just giving them nothing would be too transparent.

I friendlily put down the modified contracts in front of the kneeling guys one by one. They were taken aback and looked up at me. What are you looking at?

“Stamp your thumbprints.”

I said, throwing over the stamp inkpad. Whether it was because of rage or because of feeling wronged, the C-Rank’s two cheeks trembled.

“This is a total scam!”

Are you cutting off your nose to spite your face?[3]

“I’m just trying to introduce an easy and comfortable job where all you have to do is pick and gather things that make money – saying that it’s a scam, isn’t that too much? At most, I changed the contract subject from C-Rank Guild to the Hunter Association, so the conditions changing to this shouldn’t be anything much.”

I was letting them take 10%; they sure were greedy.

“And you never know? If your luck is good, you might get into a decent guild.”

Of course, the probability of being sold off to a guild similar to theirs was a lot higher.

If these kinds of contracts were given to the Association, usually they became products for the shopping mall. Buying and selling people was obviously illegal, but buying and selling contracts had no problem as long as there was a mutual agreement. Of course, this was limited to Hunters.

Those guys were dejected but pressed their fingers into the ink.

“Not just the signature block, stamp the modified part too.”

Storing that many contracts, they really seemed like amateurs.

“I’ll warn you ahead of time.”

I continued, collecting the nicely thumbprint-stamped contracts.

“Don’t kick up a fuss by pointlessly objecting to the contract. When the Association contacts you, obediently say that you agreed. If you don’t, I really will find a C-Rank dungeon to shove you into.”

I actually wanted to shove them in one, but I didn’t have the kind of money to do that. C-Rank dungeons were expensive. If it was private ownership, then it was even more expensive.

To prevent them from escaping, I took their ID numbers, Hunter license numbers, and their cell phone numbers. If they got away, I could contact Do Hamin and catch them.

Yoo Myeongwoo had a dazed expression up to going outside and getting into the car. With a face that showed he didn’t know what to say, he kept on opening and closing his mouth before finally letting out a small voice.

“...Thanks.”

If you’re thankful, quickly get your skill and pay me back with your body.

“I, I don’t know how I can pay you back but... I probably don’t have a way to pay you back

but.....”

“Don’t worry too much about it.”

Just contract with Haeyeon Guild later and give me my incentive.

“What do you mean ‘don’t worry about it’, I’m.....”

Yoo Myeongwoo’s voice started to become teary. He wouldn’t be crying again, right? You can’t, don’t cry.

“It was just a coincidence! We just met accidentally! There’s really nothing to be concerned about! And half of it was Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

Yoo Myeongwoo was on the verge of tears but smiled.

“You’re really bad at lying.”

What, I thought I was good at it.

“I’m thankful towards that person too, but if it weren’t for you, he wouldn’t have stepped in. Right?”

"I mean, that's true."

From his position, what I did was definitely something to be thankful towards but it wasn't pure kindness so my conscience pricked a little.

If I didn't have the Seed-Leaf skill and Yoo Myeongwoo didn't have the aptitude for the SS-Rank skill, we would've just passed each other by. Without knowing each other's names or faces.

"I was really thankful when we met at the Association, and was very happy with your words. But, today I was really surprised and touched. Yoojin, you really..."

Wait. Wait just a moment. I don't think I can listen to what you're going to say nex...

"Are my hero."

.....Goosebumps shot up along my spine. Wow, how could he say things like that out loud? I was so embarrassed! You take the My Brat skill!

He would be able to say things like 'I love you' without a shade of hesitation, and use it well.

“...I mean, that not exactly. That’s not it.....”

Please don’t stare at me with those eyes filled with yearning. Inside the car, there was no place to hide. Hero, what kind of embarrassing crap[4], I was mortified to death. Save me. Should I open the door and run away? I was still wearing the gloves so I probably wouldn’t die.

“You were really cool. Tearing the contract and slamming the guys coming at you into the table, and making those guys sign the contract too.”

...The man who broke an iron door with one kick was sitting in the driver’s seat right in front of you, so why were you being like that to me? Usually, shouldn’t it be ‘wow, Kim Sunghan-ssi, you’re so cool, definitely an A-Rank!’?

“A-anyways, I get it, so.”

Before I could die of shame, I quickly changed the subject.

“That, newbie Hunter training! It’s going to start on Tuesday.”

“Are you really going to let me receive that? Truthfully, I don’t really have much confidence.”

Yoo Myeongwoo said, gloomily. His state was already bad but after those guys tried to make him sign the contract, his self-esteem seemed to have dropped even more.

“What do you mean you don’t have confidence? Hey, I’m F-Rank too.”

Of course, if I included my skills, I couldn’t say that I was an F-Rank, but Yoo Myeongwoo would soon get an SS-Rank skill, so we could say we were similar.

“...I’m completely different from you though.”

“What do you mean different? See these gloves? These are an A-Rank item that increases your Stamina and Strength stats. If you wear these, you can crush those guys’ heads too.”

That is, if you had the courage to fight. Maybe if you got your Mental state revised to high, it might be okay, but usually, lower rank Hunters fell into chaos without being able to swing their weapon even once during their first battle. That was why newbie training was necessary.

“Still, I... don’t think I can act like you do.”

His voice was dwindling and dying away[5]. Like this, he wouldn’t say he won’t take the training, right? You needed a license to go into dungeons, and you had to go into dungeons for growth to be possible.

While I was wondering what to do, I took off the manticore leather gloves. Then I tossed them at Yoo Myeongwoo.

“Huh?”

Looking at the gloves that landed in his lap, his eyes widened into circles.

“For now, you wear them. I’m not giving them to you, just lending, okay?”

“B-but you said these are an A-Rank item? Weren’t they really expensive?”

“I said before that I would lend some to you.”

“I definitely thought it would be D or lower! They said you could get by with D-Rank and lower equipment... I-I definitely can’t!”

I forced the gloves into the refusing Yoo Myeongwoo’s hands.

“What do you mean you can’t? Anyways I don’t really use it. It’s been hot lately. So at least until the newbie training ends, you use it.”

During Hunter training, you had to deal with monsters too, so it felt like he would get scared and get into trouble if I left it at that. As for me, I had experience, so it didn't matter if I didn't have things like items.

And truthfully, it was hot so I didn't want to use it either. I'd just use the belt.

"You're really..."

Clenching the leather gloves tightly, Yoo Myeonwoo had his eyes brimming with tears. The deeply moved gaze was extremely uncomfortable.

"Yoojin!"

"Wait, don't cling!"

...Fuck, I really should have run away.

[1] this is used to express anger, intimidation, other such negative emotions, but I wasn't sure if it came across that way in eng

[2] lit. 'grasp the gunstock'. Normally, it's 'wear the gunstock' or 'carry the gunstock (on your back)' which means to '(take responsibility) and do sth' or 'bite the bullet' so I'm not sure if the author is just playing around w the normal expression or if he means something

different.

[3] lit. 'lying down and spitting'

[4] lit. 'hero, what kind of freezing to death, hero' or something like that. It doesn't really tl
lit. well...

[5] lit. 'his voice was all dying (away) as if crawling on the ground'

Chapter 23: < My Person (3) >

< My Person (3) >

After dropping by the hardware store and buying a chain, we went to the Hunter Association to get rid of the contracts. The selling commission fee for the contracts was 30% of the payment, and was transferred to my registered account.

F-Ranks were so-so but I thought C-Ranks and D-Ranks would probably be reasonably profitable.

It was a little uncomfortable to take it, so I should divide it up among the victims.

“Is it really okay to owe you[1]?”

Yoo Myeongwoo asked uneasily, after we arrived at the guild and got out of the car. With his character, it was really a relief that the SS-Rank skill wasn't combat-related. Or maybe it was because of his character that he had an aptitude for a production skill.

“You heard the phone call just a while ago. It's okay to let outsiders stay in the dorms.”

Specifically, it was a rule in order to let friends and relatives or lovers, etc. visit. Living in the outsiders' dorms had a restriction on the number of people and range of actions, and was only allowed one week at most per month. And you had to write a memo that you would take all responsibility if an issue occurred.

“I can just go home...”

“Why would you do something bothersome? Just stay here until the training ends. It'll only take a few days.”

Of course, even after the training ended, I had to use some excuse to hold onto him. I had to keep him in some place I could see; I felt too uneasy to let him go off on his own. How could I extort a normal employee dorm to put him in?

“Han Yoojin-ssi.”

I was about to leave the parking lot when Kim Sunghan called me from behind. As I turned my head, I saw him with an awkward expression. What was it?

“First, I would like to apologize.”

“Excuse me?”

Suddenly, what apology? Did he do something to be sorry to me about without me knowing? Grabbing the scruff of my neck? Making the announcement from the Lost Child Center? Standing guard in front my room door was on Yoohyun’s orders.

I couldn’t think of something that required properly apologizing, so I was tilting my head when Kim Sunghan continued speaking.

“I have been misunderstanding Han Yoojin-ssi all this time.”

“...Misunderstanding?”

“Yes. To tell you the truth, I thought you were a useless obstacle that hindered Guild Leader’s future path.”

.....I mean, he wasn't wrong. The original me did cause some trouble.

"Please don't worry about it. Things like that can happen."

I just used a cheat key like regressing; you do have a good eye for people.

At my words, he smiled a little. Wow, this was the first time I saw that person smiling at me. He had always glared at me as if he would be at my throat at the drop of a hat[2].

"Please take care of me[3] even from now on."

"Ah, yes. I should be saying that..."

"Even though you've said it is alright, a wrongdoing is a wrongdoing, so if there is anything you want, please say so."

"Then, please buy me a drink."

At that time should I act drunk and say... um... the keyword? I was thinking about raising magic beasts instead of humans, though. Still, it wouldn't be bad to drink together and become friendly.

“All right. Please contact me any time.”

Kim Sunghan lightly nodded with an even more refreshed expression. I also bid him goodbye and turned back around.

I felt a little strange. I didn’t know why he was suddenly like that, but it was better than being treated like an eyesore.

“That person really doesn’t seem to have a good eye for people.”

As we left the parking lot, Yoo Myeongwoo said in a dumbfounded tone.

“How could he think you’re a useless obstacle, Yoojin?”

That was because I really was a useless obstacle, haha.

“You know I’m pretty lacking compared to my dongsaeng.”

“That’s because your ranks don’t match up. If you were also an S-Rank, you might be better. No, you’d definitely be a lot more amazing.”

What was this confidence. It felt good for people to believe in me but I'd like to be believed in a bit less than this guy did. An A-Rank wasn't good enough so now he was comparing me to an S-Rank.

"Please don't say things like that where others can hear. Especially where it's full of Yoohyun's fans. You'll get stoned at any moment."

Thanks to that, after I got into serious trouble, I really hated coming here. There were gazes flying from every direction, looking at the trash.

At my words, Yoo Myeongwoo hunched his neck and searched the surroundings.

"S-still, the truth is the truth."

What do you mean, truth?

"But anyways, you're not going to take the gloves off? It should be stuffy."

"It's okay! I'm going to keep on wearing it until training ends."

He answered, smiling brightly. ...He wouldn't go around doing everything wearing that, right?

I took Yoo Myeongwo and went towards the security room in the corner of the lobby. Yerim and I directly got the okay to pass through from the guild leader but if regular outsiders were going into the areas besides floors 1-3, they had to go through a security check.

“I’d like to let an outsider visit the high rank Hunter dorms.”

As soon as I opened the security room door and spoke, the female employee at the desk told me to come over.

“After the security check, you can register the visit at the dorm maintenance on the 15th floor. Which person requires the security check?”

“This person. He’s an Awakened Person.”

“Please tell me your name and phone number, and if you are a Hunter, then your license queue number.”

Yoo Myeongwoo told her his name and phone number. Shortly after she tapped on the keyboard, a different employee brought over a bracelet that could be locked by a key.

“This is an inventory sealing bracelet. If you take it off by force, you will be immediately evicted and will have to compensate for the following cost. After your business is concluded,

please be sure to return it.”

As the number of Awakened People increased, the most difficult thing was exactly that inventory. It was a space that couldn’t be inspected, that even F-Ranks could get as long as they Awakened.

You couldn’t put in things that didn’t come out of a dungeon so it didn’t influence real life that much, but in places that needed security, to prepare just in case, inventories were sealed. In a few years when the number of Awakened People increased a lot, sealing curses were put on entire buildings.

Thanks to that, there was talk that the best job for an Awakened Person to make a fortune without going into a dungeon was being a curse Hunter. As long as you met the conditions, you could do anything. But meeting those conditions was pretty hard so it wasn’t very applicable for combat.

After finishing up the security check and dropping by maintenance to register the visit, we went back to unit A-15. Was Yerim still in the middle of getting styled[4]?

“This is your dorm room?”

Going inside the house, Yoo Myeongwoo admired with round, wide eyes.

“Your house is really great. Instead of a dorm, it seems like a high-class apartment.”

“The service is also great. Up to a million won per month in daily necessities are provided, and cleaning and laundry are done for me twice a week.”

“Wow, really?”

Yoo Myeongwoo looked at me with an envious gaze. No, don't look at me, look at the house. Originally, I don't have the qualification to come here, okay?

“This is why everyone is so focused on rank. You have to be around A-Rank to be ushered into a guild and be given high-class facilities.”

“To be able to come to someplace like this even though you're not an A-rank – you're definitely impressive!”

“...No, this was through personal connections.”

I was going crazy. If only someone would take off those beanpods from his eyes[5]. He was acting like a girl in her teens who had met some idol[6].

Since I had left to find Yoo Myeongwoo as soon as I entered, I hadn't looked around the entire house yet. Looking around and choosing a place to stay[7], I found as much as four

rooms. It was really just an apartment. Two of them were bedrooms so there was no need to put a blanket on the sofa.

The kitchen was big and fancy, and was filled with all sorts of kitchen appliances I didn't know. That was probably an oven, what was this?

"Oh, the fridge is full too."

Of course, there were foods like vegetables and fruits, and such, but there was also orange juice and beer.

"Do you want to drink something?"

I asked, taking out the bottle of orange juice. Yoo Myeongwoo, who was hanging around the kitchen entrance, shook his head.

"No, I'm fine with just water."

"It's free anyways. Drink something. You're okay with orange juice, right?"

I took out two cups and poured the juice. That's right, did I have to do the dishes myself? There should be a dishwasher, but I didn't know what was what.

I gave a cup of juice to Yoo Myeongwoo and went to the living room. As soon as my butt hit the sofa, I was flooded with exhaustion.

I was a bum that didn't even have a salary and it was the weekend, so why was I so busy? Still, things were more or less arranged, so I should rest and do nothing until Monday.

'Yerim already contracted and the guild will take care of everything, so after I make that guy get the skill, I would really be done.'

I didn't need a healer. I won't do it. I was just going to live easily. I was going to become a full[8] sloth.

Ah, I had to feed Peace. I guess I would have to go up in a bit.

Blankly sipping the juice, I turned on the TV. Yoo Myeongwoo was holding the cup, and was hovering like he didn't know what to do. You could just sit and drink, did I have to tell you that too?

"Come here and sit down."

"Uh, okay."

He hurried over and sat in the remaining seat. At least he listened well.

“If you’re going to stay a couple of days, you probably need to bring over some things; do you happen to have any more strong men who will come knocking or breaking down your door?”

“Huh? Oh, no. They said since I Awakened and was even going to get training, I could pay them back by going into dungeons... Apparently they had moved the debt over to those guys back then. Saying that an F-Rank with support skills couldn’t make money.....”

So it was like that. I was wondering why Hunters suddenly made an appearance.

“Then, rest today and go bring over things you need tomorrow. If you’re uneasy, wear the gloves when you go.”

It was too annoying for me to go along. At any rate, I was a weakling[9] with no equipment.

I put down the juice I drank about half of, and stood up. I took the chain I bought from the hardware store and a tool I borrowed from maintenance went toward the door connecting to unit A-16 that was on one of the sides of the living room.

Was this it after just putting in a door? If the door suddenly opened while I was watching a horror movie and drinking beer in the middle of the night, I’d get a heart attack. With Yerim’s character, she probably wouldn’t well-manneredly knock.

“Should I help?”

“No, I’m fine.”

I put in a nail with the drill and installed the chain, before returning to and sinking down onto the sofa. I should drink some beer after feeding Peace later. Did this place allow food delivery? It had been a while since I had chicken and beer[10] and I wanted some – I could just go down to receive it, right?

“...After training is over, I probably wouldn’t have any reason to come here, right?

Yoo Myeongwoo said in a regretful voice, playing with the empty cup. Normally, that would be so. Since there was no need for Haeyeon Guild to take in an F-Rank with with one buff skill.

But I had to grab onto him. What excuse should I use?

“There’s always coming over to see a friend. Though it might be a little hard to come here as a Hunter. Even my contract isn’t as a guild Hunter, but as a normal employee.”

“Huh why?”

Yoo Myeongwoo had an expression like he couldn't understand. What do you mean why, it was because I'm an F-Rank. Of course, Suk Simyeong wanted to bring me in as a guild member, but through normal procedures, I wouldn't pass because of my rank.

"Haeyeon Guild doesn't even have many C-Ranks. A-Ranks and B-Ranks are prioritized, obviously. Still, normal employees might get additional points as long as they have Hunter licenses, so you never know. If your training results are good, you might get recommended to join."

Of course, there wasn't actually something like that. Really, how could I grab onto Yoo Myeongwoo? ...Should I make a deal with Suk Simyeong? 5 hours a week... no, 3 hours..... Shit.

"Are you good with housework?"

"What? Uh, I can boil ramen pretty well."

I could boil ramen too. Then again, you had to cook to get better at it, and he wouldn't have been able to buy ingredients so how would he be able to cook well?

"That is, they said I could employ a housekeeper with my own money. Of course, I'm not actually asking you to be my housekeeper; even after finishing training, it would probably take quite a lot of time for an F-Rank to find a place? So I was wondering what you thought

of pretending to be my resident housekeeper and staying here for a few months. I have enough rooms anyways, and it's boring to live alone."

At my words, Yoo Myeongwoo froze solid as if completely shocked. As expected, asking him to be a housekeeper wasn't too good. But, I couldn't think of a good way to put him in the employee dorm...

"Yoojin!"

"Huh? What-."

"You're really a kind and great friend!"

That Myeongwoo pulled me over and hugged me again. Damn, why was this bastard's strength... ah right, I gave him my gloves. Should I just take them back?

"Move away a little! What do you mean, kind? I don't have money so I can't even give you pay!"

"Don't say that. Do you know how much the monthly rent is in this neighborhood! Really... I don't know what to say."

...Speaking of, if you considered the large size of the house as well as the location, I should

completely let go of the salary. But anyways, let go. Just let go a lit-.

Bam!

“Ahjussi!”

Along with the energetic yell, the nicely installed chain brutally fell and rolled on the floor.

.....It's okay. I expected this. I knew this would happen.

[1] the particular phrase used here is also used when you stay over at someone's house, which is what YMW is referring to.

[2] lit. 'grab and eat me' for the 'be at my throat'/'treat me harshly', and idk how to tl the 'drop of a hat' part literally so you're just gonna have to take my word for it that that's what it means generally.

[3] y'all kno the drill, standard polite phrase, etc. etc. This is probs the last time I'm footnoting this.

[4] lit. 'getting/receiving coordi', see footnote [9] from ch. 20

[5] from the expression 'be covered by beanpods' which means 'blinded by love'

[6] idk if this needs to be explained, but 'idols' (eng word transliterated) are a type of people in the entertainment industry, usually singers/dancers in boy/girl groups. They're micromanaged to appeal to fans so they're thought of as formulaic and not really 'real singers' but, like, opinions vary.

[7] I think in this case he means 'sleep' but not sure

[8] 'full' as in 'stomach is full'

[9] lit. 'water body'. Idk if this is a word the author made up or a real slang word, but from the context and the fact that 'water' is used sometimes to describe something weak, I assumed that's what it meant

[10] chi-mek (slang) from 'chicken' (usually fried chicken if the eng word is used) and 'mekjoo' (beer)

Chapter 24: < My Person (4) >

< My Person (4) >

I was about to nag to the boldly entering Yerim that she should knock first when going into someone else's house, when.

'It's a scam!'

Seeing Yerim's appearance, I shut my mouth.

The female middle schooler wearing a, truthfully a little scruffy, tracksuit changed into a teenage model who looked like she was from a sports drink advertisement. Instead of getting styled, wasn't it a complete transformation?

A natural look where you couldn't tell if she was wearing make-up, a face that pulled up as much charm as possible, activewear short shorts, and a T-shirt that refreshingly exposed the arms. The curly short hair added an androgynous feel and was reminiscent of a young god[1] from Greek myths.

They probably dressed her up by emphasizing the Hermes' Sandals skill. She did really look like a good-looking boy who could fly away soon. It suited her, and was very pretty, but.

'...The ice witch has completely disappeared.'

The cold and haughty good-looking woman completely vanished. She was still young... she would probably change when she grew up. Though, however she changed, it wouldn't have anything to do with me, but I felt a little weird seeing the future I knew become completely

different.

“Who...”

Yoo Myeongwoo asked, seeing Yerim suddenly appear. Yerim’s cheerful face hardened quickly.

Striding over, the young girl lightly jumped over the table and grabbed the scruff of Yoo Myeongwoo’s neck. Then half throwing him, she pushed him to a sofa corner and sat, stuck close to me.

“What is this, clinging disgustingly to my[2] ajussi.”

Bak Yerim slanted her eyes sharply and glared at Yoo Myeongwoo.

You were also clinging to me right now, though. Of course, there was no point in comparing a fully grown man and a pretty female middle schooler.

“N-no, I’m...”

Pierced with the fierce gaze, Yoo Myeongwoo mumbled as he hunched over. It was a pitiful sight but I wasn’t sympathetic. While you’re at it, fix that clinging habit a little.

“You sit further away, too. And knock first when you’re going over to someone else’s house.”

“I wanted to quickly show you my new clothes so it slipped my mind.”

Saying that, she shot up and spread out both arms.

“How am I?”

“Pretty.”

“It’s not too boyish?”

“It’s cute.”

“Isn’t that too insincere?”

Then what did you want me to say? Who knew about 5 years later, but right now, even if you were pretty, you were a kid.

“You’re seriously pretty and cute. I was just surprised because you changed so much I

almost didn't recognize you."

Finally, she was satisfied and smiled. Oh dear, I'm your guardian, not your dad. But I couldn't say anything to the kid who didn't have a real dad, so I had to hold back.

"But who is that ahjussi?"

Yerim asked, turning to look at Yoo Myeongwoo, who was watching.

"Friend."

"Ack, really? Hello."

At Yerim's unexpectedly polite greeting, Yoo Myeongwoo was relieved. I guess the attitude of a girl who suddenly appeared and glared at him was enough to be scary, after I told him that everyone who lived here except for me were all A-Ranks.

But that guy was really faint-hearted.

"Uh, he...llo? I'm Yoo Myeongwoo."

"I am Bak Yerim. And Han Yoojin ahjussi is my guardian. Did you come over to hang out?"

At her amiable voice, Yoo Myeongwoo's frozen body completely loosened. He answered, smiling.

"No. Due to circumstances, I'm staying over[3] for a few days."

"Stay over? Ahjussi doesn't have a house?"

"What? No, it's not that I don't have one."

"Then why?"

Yerim's tone of voice rose slightly and at the same time, a red light went off in my head. If I left it here, that little tongue would probably mercilessly flay Yoo Myeongwoo. See, her eyes fierced again.

"Yerim, don't."

"But! Even I live separately!"

"Stop that and sit down."

“...Yes.”

Still, it was a relief she listened to me well. Though it was a little strange that she followed so well. It was to the point that I would've seemed like her dad if I had been twelve or so years older.

...She wouldn't actually be thinking of me as her dad, right?

“The two you, get along well. You'll be taking the newbie Hunter training together anyways.”

“Wasn't it just me and ahjussi together?”

“We have to do that with this girl?”

The two people yelled at the same time. Then they looked at each other, before Yoo Myeongwoo looked away first.

“Yerim, I told you to stop.”

If you act like that, you might regret it later. Do you know how important high ranking equipment are to Hunters, that you would glare and such at the future's manufacturer?

“I’ll say this again, but get along well. Since the two of you are my precious friend and guardee.”

Even better, it would be nice if those two became close and left me and went about their own business well on their own. Though, so far as I could tell, that seemed impossible.

“Who is more precious to ahjussi?”

“The two of you are the same.”

As soon as I carelessly answered, Yerim wrinkled her forehead.

“Still, wouldn’t there be a tiny difference? Even a tiny, tiny bit.”

“That’s...”

Putting aside Yerim, Myeongwoo, why were you putting on an expectant expression?

“I like diligent people who work hard at what they need to do.”

So, while I relax, work hard please. Then I really might like you about twice as much more than now.

“I’ll go to the training room and warm up a bit!”

Yerim bolted up and said. Then, Yoo Myeongwoo sat up too.

“Th-then, me too... I’ll make dinner!”

Looking at them both run off quickly, I felt refreshed. I should’ve done this before.

‘Well... it probably wouldn’t last though.’

Right now, they were trying to cling to me, but how long would that last?

Yerim was an S-Rank combat Hunter. Soon she would become famous and be busy making a lot of money and living her life glamorously.

It was the same for Yoo Myeongwoo. He only needed to get the SS-Rank production skill and the whole world would come looking for him to ask him to make equipment for them. Of course A-Ranks, but even S-Ranks would yield and request for him.

They would get praise and love from so many people, so would I even be in their sight then?

Even while saying it's annoying, it's annoying, I felt like the determined future was a little lonely.

'Still, living well on their own would be the best.'

If they continued to cling to me after their names became known and they took center stage, then it would be hardest for me. With just Yoohyun, I got pulled into various fights, if there were three, whew.

I thought about slowly going over to Peace, when my cell phone rung. It was Suk Simyeong.

'Why this ahjussi again?'

I saw him in the morning so why call me again? Since it was Sunday, you should finish work early and rest. I oppose working on the weekends.

[I heard the story from Hunter Kim Sunghan.]

The affable voice said. That was fast. From his attitude, it didn't seem like he called to blame me, saying there was a problem in handling things.

[To use a Hunter contract in that way. You surprised me once again.]

"...Excuse me?"

Ah... Did they not use it like that yet?

[It is a method that can easily be thought up of if one changes their thinking a little; it is embarrassing that I did not think of it. I suppose this is what you would call Columbus' egg[4].]

"No, it wasn't anything much."

It wasn't something I had thought up of, it was something everyone used. There was no way to explain that.

"At any rate, targets it can be used on are limited. Since they have to agree to directly sign the contract."

If the other person refused to the end, then you couldn't use it. And, they had to be aware of the the contents of the contract, so fooling them and making them sign was impossible.

“Furthermore, it doesn’t work if they themselves believe that it isn’t a lie. So, rather, it can be used against you in return.”

It was a case that happened abroad. A big guild was completely ruined.

[Indeed. That could happen.]

“However certain you are of the effects, you can’t have blind faith in one sheet of parchment. As long as there are skills, a loophole can appear anywhere.”

For skills, the types and range of application were diverse. Since those things kept on tearing down the laws that were maintained until now, you couldn’t respond with just common sense.

It was only the 3rd year since dungeons, Awakened People appeared. Once the confusion was handled and things started to adjust, the pace of change would increase even more.

[I understand. As expected, I become more interested in engaging in longer conversations with you.]

“It is not helpful to that extent...”

Actually, there were many things I could do for him. If I alone used the information I remembered, I would just buy some stocks. But if Haeyeon Guild had that, they would be able to change many things.

‘...Though I decided not to put myself forward.’

Would it be okay to release those kinds of things? Truthfully, I was uneasy. Especially about the future I knew changing, and the situation where the things I knew weren’t reality.

Even if I acted like I knew all sorts of things. Of course, people connected to me would have increased expectations. But if many things in the future were reversed because of my words, from that moment, I would degenerate from a wise man who can predict the future into someone sprouting nonsense.

So staying in my lane would be the best. I really didn’t want to reach an outcome where I was shunned by everyone because I was unruly without knowing my place, like before.

...Still, wouldn’t just one or two things be okay?

And there was that thing I just remembered.

“If you really want to listen to my words, could I say one thing?”

[Please go ahead.]

I checked that Yoo Myeongwoo was in the kitchen, and moved toward the window seat and opened my mouth. If it was this distance, a stat F would definitely not be able to hear, right? It was great that my house was big.

“I know that bidding for a new A-Rank dungeon is scheduled to happen in a while.”

In the case where a new dungeon was discovered late and attacking it was urgent, support was gathered prioritizing the Hunter Association. But if the time until dungeon shock was enough, they went up for auction.

The rewards for the first attack was the best and the guild that attacked first got the managing priority rights, so the higher ranking the dungeon was, the incredibly high the bidding price and competition were.

[You must be speaking of the dungeon near Gyeonggi Icheon.]

“Yes. That dungeon is... probably going to be slime, or seashore environment.”

Specifically, it was a slime dungeon. For slimes, magic stones were obvious, and they were valuable monsters whose entire bodies could be used as ingredients for all sorts of products.

It was to the extent that people said that guilds didn't have to worry about funds with one A-Rank slime dungeon.

From my memory, one of the 3 big guilds, MKC Guild, won Icheon's A-Rank slime dungeon. With those product ingredients in hand, they acted quite high-handedly.

Slime dungeons, and the similarly estimated seashore environments, were slightly lacking in rank, but they were dungeons with a lot of precious natural resources.

[.....You are able to know this ahead of time?]

After a short silence, Suk Simyeong asked in a voice one level lower. I guess it would be hard to believe.

"I am not sure yet, but there are types of rules to dungeon creation."

It was a truth, not an excuse. It was impossible right now, lacking the related materials, but roughly 3 years later, it would become possible to predict more or less a new dungeon's environment or the monsters that would appear in it.

[Rules?]

"Yes. It differs according to order and location, local environment, etc. Of course, it's not

exact, so please take it only as a reference. With Haeyeon Guild's current ability, wouldn't bidding on this A-Rank dungeon be possible? Even if you can't believe my words, it wouldn't be a bad thing to bid."

Over the cell phone, it was quiet again. This time, the silence was longer.

Then again, the idea was complicated. If you really could figure out the state of a dungeon before attacking, it would be incredibly advantageous over the other guilds.

[...Bidding on a dungeon is not in my jurisdiction, but I will try to make a strong proposal.]

After a long while, Suk Simyeong answered. He said it wasn't his jurisdiction but with his position, he could easily make it go through.

[After the new A-Rank dungeon attack is finished, may I hear your opinion on other dungeons?]

"If it is possible. For now, it's difficult to calculate."

The calculation method was considerably complex, so I didn't know how. I was merely relying on my memory.

"Please keep the secret no matter what."

If it was Suk Simyeong, I could trust him. Since he was still Haeyeon Guild's reliable axis even 5 years later. Yoohyun had a lot of good luck with people. Besides me.

[Please do not worry. I will surely guard it as if it is higher than Guild Leader's personal information. Then, I will contact you again in the near future.]

Suk Simyeong ended the call with a considerably more careful attitude than our first call. How should I say it, it felt like he changed from an attitude of treating a reserve subordinate to someone with equal position.

'Saying this much should be fine.'

It was the time when the pressure from the 3 big guilds slowly became worse. Yoohyun, as well as Yerim and Yoo Myeongwoo. They were the guild's leader and were planned to become the guild's axes so there was no way they wouldn't be dragged in.

Even though I complained that they should live well on their own, they were still my people who I had raised and had brought over.

'Not to the extent of the small to medium guilds' shares, but I'll steal away the 3 big guilds.'

Still, it would be better even for the country for Haeyeon to take the lead. The guild leader

was a guy who threw his own life away to save his useless hyung, though it might not be so for the entire Haeyeon Guild of course. It would be better than the major companies and the great guilds conspiring with them.

So let's help out a little.

[1] lit. 'young boy god' where 'young boy' is one word, but tl-ing it to 'boy god' sounded weird. Anyways he's saying she looks like a young god, not a young goddess.

[2] repeating this again just in case probably for the final time, but it's actually 'our'. 'My' just makes more sense in eng

[3] lit. 'owe [him] a little', see footnote [1] from prev. ch.

[4] despite my 25 yrs of life & living 20 of it in the u.s., I have never heard of this, but apparently it is a thing according to wikipedia. Word for word from the 1st sentence of wiki is 'brilliant idea or discovery that seems simple or easy after the fact'. Also, here is an obligatory, albeit unrelated, fuck columbus.

Chapter 25: < OFF (1) >

< OFF (1) >

“The installation is complete.”

“Thank you very much![1]”

Finally, the pen for Peace was finished. I looked at Peace’s new house with a pointlessly proud heart.

It had clean glass walls, air purification facilities and hot and cold rooms, and even a hardwood shelter, so rather than a beast pen, it seemed like a high-class smoking room. Thanks to taking up about half of the living room, it was incredibly large. If it was that much, it wouldn’t be stifling even when he was alone.

Besides the pen, the inner door of the entrance was changed to a sturdier one. The whole glass in the living room was originally specially made glass so they said it would be okay.

As soon as the preparation was complete, I went straight to Yoohyun’s greenhouse and brought Peace over. When I lowered him onto the living room, he was only awkward about the unfamiliar surroundings for a short moment, and soon started to explore, twitching the end of his nose.

“You can’t bite the wires.”

Though the wiring was very tidy, so there were barely any exposed parts.

“Later, an ahjussi is coming so don’t bite him.”

Yoo Myeongwoo had gone to his house to bring over his things. He was about the size of a cat, but Peace was at the level of a stat C-Rank and Myeongwoo was F-Rank so if the two fought, Yoo Myeongwoo would be KO’d[2] right away. I should be careful to make sure the two weren’t alone together in one place.

-Geureureung!

Peace, who had continued on from the living room to inspect the kitchen, came over to my feet as if pleased and sprawled out on his back. As soon as I picked up that purring[3] thing, he clung on immediately as if he was just waiting to.

“Our Peace, how are you so cute.”

How would I be able to starve him? Still, I couldn’t not promote his growth. ...Should I teach him Korean?

Carrying Peace, I went to sit on the sofa and turned on the TV. Light came on from the fairly large television hanging on the wall and a special broadcast came on. The backdrop was none other than the Hunter Association.

The reporter was loudly chattering about how a new Korean S-Rank Awakened Person would soon appear.

“Yerim must have gone to register as an Awakened Person.”

It was only just noon, she went early. Soon after, the camera zoomed into a car coming into the Association parking lot. The car stopped and Haeyeon Guild A-Rank Hunter Kim Jiyeon came out of the driver’s seat. Then, Yerim also appeared on the camera.

“She was sullen that I wouldn’t be coming with but she looks fine.”

Or was it because they did something for the screen? It was really great to see the expression overflowing with confidence.

All the way to the Association building and to the high rank measuring room, the camera persistently followed her from behind. Yerim’s attitude while doing an interview before being measured was extremely natural to the point that it seemed like she was skilled at it. She was doing well.

“Peace, look at that. It’s Yerim noona[4]. You’ll see that noona often from now on.”

I said, grabbing Peace’s two front legs and waving them. The noona you have to be friendly with... wait, was ‘noona’ right?

‘...What was Peace’s sex again?’

I didn’t check if he was female or male. I didn’t hear anything from Yoohyun either. When I looked down at Peace’s face, two round golden eyes looked back at me. Cute.

I couldn’t tell from his appearance.

“Hm... Should I check really quick?”

I’d probably know if I turn him upside down.”

“Peace, be good~. Let’s lie down for a bit.

I lowered him to the sofa and lightly rolled him over. Peace, maybe thinking that we were playing, didn’t really protest and wagged his tail. Let’s see, this is the anus and... um... uh.....

“.....It’s not there.”

He had neither. What. Was it stored away? Did mammals also have stored forms? Of course, he was a monster so you couldn’t expect normal common sense.

“Well, whatever.”

Whether he was female or male, as long as he grew up strong and well, that was all that mattered. The small front paws grabbed my hand and chewed[5] painlessly. In response, I scratched the soft mane at his nape and stood up from my seat.

Now, I should slowly prepare to arrange my life funds.

-Keeahng

As soon as I moved to the room, Peace whined and quickly followed. I had no choice but to hold that guy, and turned on the computer.

I had dropped by the bank in the morning, and had completely organized my bankbook and even opened a new account for stocks. It should be okay if I left about 10 million won to use for the time being and invested the rest. I was thinking of first buying the pharmaceutical stocks that would be wildly successful in two months, and then placing the increased money here and there in places that would definitely be a hit.

There was no way that the future would be 100% the same so it would be better to divide up.

‘The hair loss remedy would be developed properly, right?’

It was after just two months so it probably wouldn’t change.

After putting out the money, I browsed the portal site. There was a commotion everywhere from the appearance of a new S-Rank. Amongst that, there were also trash journalists who were writing novels about Yerim’s deceased parents. These crazy bastards. I quickly made a PDF and reported it to the Haeyeon Guild public relations team.

-Keureueu

Since I was working at the computer[6] for a long time, Peace started to complain. As soon as I took my hand off the mouse in appeasement, scarily,

Pajik!

The small front paws smashed the mouse flat as if catching a cockroach. ...Our Peace, you must’ve been bored.

“Even if you are bored, you can’t break things like this. Dad[7] is going to be poor for a while.”

Zero living expenses and 300[8] monthly wasn’t a small sum of money, but just in case, I had

to be thrifty. Since it was a sum that would be half gone if I went into a dungeon. And I could only go into a low ranking dungeon at that. Other than that, situations where I needed money could occur any time.

“A mouse wouldn’t be much, but the computer and cell phone are prohibited. It’s expensive to buy new things that are usable.”

-Gyareureung

At the words said in an accusatory tone, Peace quick-wittedly acted cute. He licked my hand and playfully swished his tail. Watching this, I wondered if he would quickly understand even words like ‘I love you’. It would be great if I could successfully apply the keyword without starving the poor kid.

I went to the kitchen, and fed Peace and also ate my own lunch. Even though Yoo Myeongwoo hadn’t cooked before, he made pretty decent side dishes[9]. Was it thanks to his basic hand skills? After one to two months or so, he might unexpectedly become first rate.

[Bak Yerim-yang’s initial skills are three in total, and among those, one is as much as SS-Rank.]

The small television in the kitchen continued showing the broadcast on Yerim. During that time, the rank measuring must have finished, because there was ‘Birth of the 8th S-Rank Combat Hunter’ in large captions. It was enthusiastically explained that because of this, we

would catch up with China and become world best relative to per area and the citizens' safety blah blah.

China around now had nine S-Ranks and Japan had five. But China didn't do registration and had many S-Ranks who hid their identity. Who would want their families to be taken hostage and want to be tied to the government?

In the end, S-Rank were obvious, and even A-Rank and lower Hunters escaped to foreign countries one by one, and so after 4 years, China lost the ability to manage high ranking dungeons.

'Wait, they're people who're going to leave China anyways, so should I steal some Hunters away?'

Within a half year, Awakening Centers would appear so I didn't even need to Awaken them one by one. If they were combat Hunters, even if I didn't use the Seed-Leaf skill and they Awakened at the Center, it would be close to optimization more or less. If I brought the future's A~S-Rank combat Hunters and their families into the country, then my job would be done.

'If it's a half year later, my pockets would have gotten fuller as I stole away several people, and if I just Awaken A-Ranks and higher, the country or guild would probably figure out the other procedures on their own.'

There was definitely one A-Rank healer. It would be perfect if I put them in Haeyeon. The

government and guilds could discuss and divide up the rest.

‘Eh[10], since it’s the same thing as helping people who would suffer instead of using my skills.’

I didn’t even have to directly put myself forward, and only had to hire some brokers. Other countries also took away Chinese Hunters in that way. Later, as the surveillance got worse, it became bloody, not figuratively but for real.

‘It was definitely a brutal neighborhood.’

In the first place, it was normal that you went into dungeons risking your life, so it was definitely a matter of course. Still, for a full-blown war to start, there was still about three years left. The number of dungeons increased, and monsters that were impossible to deal with like Lahtas burst out, and there weren’t enough high-ranking Hunters, so as S-Rank dungeons began to burst open, it became really brutal.

At that, Korea was on the peaceful side compared to foreign countries.

However, if I searched the entire world diligently and regularly discovered one S-Rank per month, and took in and raised A~B-Ranks that didn’t Awake optimally.

If I did that, the future might change into a considerably more positive direction, but.

‘.....Ehh, is there any need to worry about other countries as well? Let’s just end with adding several to Korea.’

Doing what with my condition. Amazing and high up people would probably do well on their own. Even 5 years later, it was just a bit tough to live; it wasn’t to the point of being wretched.

I draped Peace on my shoulders and cleared the dining table. I didn’t have anything to do right now; it felt like the weekend even though it was Monday. It would be great if it was always like this from now on.

Just then, I heard a text alert from my cell phone. It was Kim Sunghan.

[Since the novice Hunter training starts tomorrow, I will buy alcohol today if it is alright with you.]

Well, the first day would be theory class but starting from the second day, it would double up with practice so it wouldn’t do to drink alcohol the day before that. Though I was someone with over 4 years of field experience, I couldn’t reveal that.

‘Should I say the keyword or not?’

Let's decide after getting a little drunk. If it seemed doable, then I would spit it out, and if not, then I wouldn't.

[Yes. Please contact me in the evening. It would be great if it was shop with an easygoing atmosphere.]

There would be people who recognize him sometimes so it would be annoying for Kim Sunghan, but I didn't want to go somewhere where you had to wear a tie because it would be stuffy. And it wouldn't be an atmosphere for saying the keyword.

If it was a boisterous place where you passed around drinks, nonsense like 'I love you' would quickly get covered up.

[I understand.]

Shortly, the reply came. Speaking of, was HunTalk[11] not created yet? The actual name had been H-Talk but everyone had called it HunTalk and it was a messenger exclusively for Hunters. Lower ranking Hunters without fixed parties had used it to gather a party to go into a dungeon. Though I wouldn't need to use it now.

I should buy stocks for HunTalk too. Where was it created again?

Yoo Myeongwoo came back and there was a short fuss, but our smart Peace quickly distinguished between things he could eat and things he couldn't eat. He didn't leave a single bite mark on Yoo Myeongwoo.

...Actually there was exactly one left. Still, there wasn't blood and left only a slight imprint, so just that much was commendable.

My[12] kid must be a genius.

Then, there was a little trouble too with Yerim, who had returned late in the afternoon. 'The cat is so cute!' rang out about thrity times and Peace threw a fit and scratched my shoulder. Our poor Peace.

I kicked out and sent Yerim back to her house and arranged a soft place to sleep for stressed-out Peace, and then Kim Sunghan contacted me.

"I'm going out, so don't open Peace's pen, and stop Yerim from coming over."

At my words, Yoo Myeongwoo's complexion turned pale.

"M-me...?"

"She's also a person you can get through to with words. Don't be so afraid."

You'll have to deal with a lot of S-Ranks from now on, so you should get used to it while you're at it. Not to mention, you're going to be the boss[13], punk. Don't get scared.

I thumped Yoo Myeongwoo's drooping shoulders, and went down to the parking lot where Kim Sunghan would be waiting.

The place where we arrived was a bustling street not that far from Haeyeon Guild.

"...Here?"

Slightly flustered, I stared at the pub, the sparkling sign that Kim Sunghan guided us to. This was too, that is... too young kids... in their 20s, and early to mid at that, weren't they the target? Kids that seemed like college students were going in and out. Just what did you think of me...

...But thinking of it, I was actually in my mid 20s. My age kept on slipping my mind.

But even when I was in my early 20s, I ate pork belly and soju with factory ahjussis. It was my first at such a light, lively, fresh place. It was colorful. And what was the 'hunting[14]' written on the banner? Was it a club? The music spilling out gave that kind of feel too...

No matter what, this didn't seem right. This atmosphere wasn't right.

“I didn’t know places like this so I received a recommendation from a different Hunter.”

Kim Sunghan said. Recommendation... a recommendation... it did look popular.

“...Whose recommendation was it?”

“It was Kim Minee, a B-Rank Hunter. He is a college student who is three years younger than Han Yoojin-ssi. He said this place is a fairly popular[15] and easygoing place around here.”

No, I didn’t mean ‘easygoing’ as in a student’s standard of ‘easygoing’.....

“Student Minee... doing Hunter work on top of studying must make him busy, but it seems like he’s familiar with recent popular places.”

“If he wasn’t a Hunter, he would have been expelled.”

Kim Minee-gun[16] must have played a lot. If he was a guild-affiliated B-Rank Hunter, they would have considered him as someone who found a job already and tolerated a lot, but that he was on the verge of expulsion – did he not go to school at all?

And speaking of, I remembered that Yoohyun also was specially admitted into a school and had an attendance rate of zero. Yerim didn't have a reason to go to school anymore, too.

C-Rank and higher minors were moved to an Awakened Person special school for safety or were homeschooled. Since it was dangerous in various ways if you placed super youth at a tough age, who teachers couldn't block with their strength, with their weak peers.

"Let's go inside."

Kim Sunghan said, as if there was nothing wrong. I at least had a face that was in its 20s but you were in your 30s? Not to mention, with a stiff frown and a serious appearance adding five to six years at face value – weren't you uncomfortable? No matter how you looked at it, he didn't look like a customer, and seemed like an uncle who came to find his indecent nephew.

And he had on sunglasses that didn't fit the time, to cover his face, so he also looked like a thug that came to collect money..... Look there, the kids passing by are glancing over nervously.

"You're not coming in?"

He asked, turning to look at me, who was mumbling. Ahjussi. I mean, I didn't actually have a problem. It was just a little awkward, but I was in my twenties. If I had gone to college normally, I would have gone to places like this.

“...I’m going.”

I swallowed dryly and moved. I guess trying out one of these places would be good. And enjoy my youth since I’ve regressed...

[1] this is that ‘you’ve worked hard’ polite phrase that’s come up prev times. In this case, it makes more sense in eng to tl to ‘thank you’.

[2] the raws literally said ‘KO’ in eng

[3] lit. ‘going gareung’ which might not exactly be purring, idk, but it seemed close

[4] ‘noona’ is like ‘hyung’ but it’s what boys call their older sisters or close female friends who are older.

[5] 앙앙 물다 means ‘bite (like) ahng ahng’ where ‘ahng’ is an onomotopeia word that is used when playfully biting. Since the word is repeated, it’s likely implying that Peace is biting several times, hence chewing

[6] lit. ‘do mouse-action’ as in computer mouse

[7] remember, it is normal for ppl to refer to themselves in 3rd person using relationship modifiers (dad/mom, hyung, noona, etc.)

[8] probably 3 mil won (as in 300 ten-thousand since krn counts in 4 digits)

[9] usually, a meal consists of rice, soup, and various banchan (what I tl'd as 'side dishes')

[10] actually it's lit. '[main sentence], what' but this conveys the meaning better in eng

[11] kakaotalk (abbreviated to katalak) is a chatting/messaging app in korea, so that's probably what's being referenced.

[12] actually 'our' but idk using 'our kid' sounded more off than 'our Peace' (which I left as is) so I switched it to 'my'

[13] the word used here is one that is used when talking about people/groups, in the way someone might say 'person A, person B, etc.' in eng, where in this case, this word is the equiv to 'A'. Since it comes first, there's a connotation of being better/more powerful, having higher priority. So it's also a way of saying 'someone that has a lot of power'.

[14] this is the eng word transliterated into krn, again as konglish slang, meaning 'pick up/hit on'

[15] lit. 'be hot' w 'hot' being the eng word transliterated, meaning a metaphorical meaning of 'hot'. I thought 'popular' sounded more colloquial in eng since no one really uses 'hot' except to describe an attractive person

[16] pronounced 'goon' from the chn/hanja 君. Equiv. to 'mister/mr.' for young men, corresponding to 'yang'

Chapter 26: < OFF (2) >

< OFF (2) >

"Wh-what can I do for you?"[1]

A young employee in his early twenties standing at the entrance was frozen stiff after seeing Kim Sunghan. Well, it was a face that would be scary to meet in a dim place.

"Do you know Kim Minee?"

Kim Sunghan asked in a low voice, as if interrogating. Like that, the kid might cry. He was completely terrified.

"Ki-Kim Minee... Ah, Minee hyung? Yes! He contacted me!"

I was wondering why he was asking that out of nowhere, but it seemed like Kim Minee had said he would put in a word since it was one of his hangouts. Relieved, the employee forced on a smile.

“So you were Minee hyung’s sunbaes[2]. Please come in! We left a quiet place for you!”

How should I say this, it felt like it became an atmosphere where we would be ushered into a room. Of course, there weren’t anything like rooms, and it was seats that were off to the side in a corner. The location was good, but I most liked that there was a partition put up.

It was a feeling where I wanted, in various ways, to hide.

“I will bring over the most popular ones quiiickly! For drinks, imported beer? We also have hard liquor, but 17-year-old Valentine is the best. It didn’t sell well so we only have a few bottles.”

The employee, who had recovered his spirits during that time, chattered frivolously. Kids these days had no fear.

Sitting across from me, Kim Sunghan looked at me as if telling me to order. I raised the menu that was on the table and then lowered it gently. There were too many snacks and drinks. My staple was just Iseul[3].

“Please bring a reasonable amount of beer and soju.”

Up to you, reasonably, nicely.

“Yes, hyung-nim!”

The employee gave a 90 degree bow and sped away.

The sound of the fast-paced music and the sound of laughter were noisy. When I was coming in, I noticed there was even a small stage space near the longish bar. It seemed about half a club.

While I was looking around the surroundings a little, the alcohol and snacks came out. It was fast. Assorted fritters and fruits, budae jjigae[4], types of snacks, and such were spread across the table. This was chicken... salad? Why salad?

“If you need something, please call me anytime~.”

You would be full with just eating the snacks. First, I lightly moistened my throat with beer and ate some snacks. This potato fritter tasted good. The greasy salty-and-sweetness from the well saturated seasonings and being heaped with sweet-based cheese sauce was really great.

“I would like to apologize once again for my misunderstanding.”

Kim Sunghan said with a sincere face and a sincere voice and a sincere attitude. Against the background sound of the fresh and lively popular song that I really liked.

As expected, this atmosphere really wasn't it. I wanted to get drunk quickly.

“I did act in a way that could be misunderstood. The matter with the Awakening broker too.”

It wasn't a misunderstanding, but he kept on saying it was one, so let's just call it that.

After adequately replying, I took some of the chicken salad with a fork. Wow, this chicken salad was tasty. What was the sauce? It was hot and spicy and made you want to drink beer with it. The meat was juicy and chewy, and it seemed like they used the leg region. As expected, for boneless chicken, thigh is the best.[5] Student Kim Minee knows[6] great places to eat.

“Wasn't that also because of different thoughts? You don't seem like someone who would be fooled by conmen and the like.”

Kim Sunghan said with conviction. Right now, I had no reason to be fooled. Like this, a conflict[7] might

happen, how should I pass this?

“That’s, truthfully, it was because of personal curiosity about Awakening brokers. I have a lot of interest in Awakened People and dungeons. I’ve done some other investigations and study as well.”

I did in the future.

“Department Head[8] Suk also said that the Yoojin-ssi is knowledgeable about Hunters. But it was still a dangerous thing to do.”

“That was because it was obvious Yoohyun wouldn’t be still. As predicted, he grabbed and pulled me away right away. Exactly speaking, it was faster than my expectation.”

Kim Sunghan drained his beer and smiled.

“Yoojin-ssi seems to move in a considerably calculating way.”

No, I’m the embodiment of impulse. Starting from the regression, it was impulsive. If I had cooled my head and acted calculatingly, I would have just become the strongest and lived well, managing critical dungeons.

“Up to finding Bak Yerim-yang, I thought it was simply luck, but gaining Yerim-yang’s trust and getting rid of a source of future troubles ahead of time and neatly finishing contracts with Department Head Suk, all of that being due to luck is impossible.”

“No, quite a bit of luck also went into it.”

If you have good luck and regress, Sunghan-ssi would also be able to do that. That’s right, skills had to

cooperate too. But getting skills was also about half luck. As expected, relying on luck was the best.

“And when you went to save your friend, truthfully speaking, I was moved. You didn’t spend a lot of time together and were just old friends that happened to meet, but you endured even danger for him. How should I say it, I thought you were someone that one could trust and entrust with one’s back.”

“T-to that extent...”

I saved him because he could get an SS-Rank skill. Being treated like someone who purely did righteous things without self-interest, for my actions full of ulterior motives, I was ashamed and had goosebumps. Yoo Myeongwoo was like that, and Suk Simyeong was like that, and misunderstandings piled up, but there was no way to clear them.

To hide my awkwardness, I drained my glass in one gulp. It would be great if I got drunk quickly. Even if you pointlessly expected things from me, there was nothing I could show for it.

“The matter with my friend was just impulsive. It was a reflexive thing, like helping up someone you found collapsed on the street.”

“Even if you say it was on reflex, simply helping someone collapsed on the street is completely different from pulling out someone who had fallen on tracks where a vehicle is coming in.”

“...It wasn’t that dangerous since Sunghan-ssi was there.”

That’s enough already. I wasn’t even drunk but my face might become red.

Let’s change the conversation topic. What should we talk about? Popular things lately? ...Thinking of, I couldn’t remember a single thing that was popular and trendy lately. There should be a new release of the Xble[9] series. Did 4 episodes of Monster Taming come out this year? When did that variety show that gathered only Awakened People start to air, again?

“Do you know Hunter Starting Today, by any chance?”

“...Excuse me?”

“No, nothing.”

I guess it hadn't started yet. HST[10] was fun. Even high ranking Hunters came out as guests. When they were recruiting for the cast for the low rank Hunter special episode, I applied too. Though I didn't make it.

“Sunghan-ssi is also an initial Awakened Person, right?”

I really didn't know the ways of the world, so I just changed the conversation to the thing that I knew best, Hunters. I should just live holding onto a TV and computer.

“Yes. More than half of the current Awakened People, of course including me, Awakened in the first dungeon shock.”

When the things called dungeons first appeared around the world, while people were just peeking at them like primitive men who discovered fire, half with vigilance and half with curiosity, supersaturated dungeons burst open one by one.

During the misfortune, thankfully, the initial dungeons were only F- to E-Rank. Only monsters that could be handled with ordinary weapons with hardly any mana poured out to the outside world.

But, ordinary people with bare hands, who weren't the armed military, had a difficult time dealing with even F-Rank monsters. Of course there were a lot of casualties, but the actual damage was surprisingly little.

It was because many of the people who were attacked by monsters Awakened.

Awakening initial skills differed according to the Awakening environment. Initial Awakened People who felt a threat to their life mostly all got attack and defence skills as initial skills. Although they were mostly F- to E-Rank, they were a lot more useful for dealing with low rank monsters than ordinary blades that you weren't familiar with.

And at least a small number of mid to high rank Awakened People appeared and the situation quickly calmed down. Even so, just in Korea, there were millions injured and thousands dead.

"The place where I was at the time was rural so it was even more dangerous. Most were elderly so it was hard to Awaken, and even if they did Awaken, stats were low."

Kim Sunghan said, draining his glass again. Like he said, if dungeons burst in areas with an aging population, the damage was larger to the point that there were cases where there were no survivors.

"Thankfully, I Awakened as an A-Rank, and was able to reduce the damage."

"Kim Sunghan-ssi must have been a complete hero for that area."

"I'm still in frequent contact with the village adults. I send them various things as well."

He smiled a little shyly.

"It was good fortune that I had gone down to my grandfather's house for the weekend after getting a vacation. If I hadn't... I wouldn't have been able to see my grandfather again."

"It seems like you are close to your grandfather."

“It is because he raised me.”

“Ah... Then your parents.....”

“They are alive. But after they divorced, my mother remarried and my father left for a foreign country and only sent child support. After I became an adult, I lost all contact so I wondered if my father also found a new family. Thanks to that, even their faces are vague.”

So it was like that. Somehow there weren't many who had smooth family lives.

It was different from Kim Sunghan's or Yoohyun's cases, but among initial Awakened People, there were actually quite a lot of people with broken families. Awakening at that time was because they were attacked by monsters and... there were many cases where they happened to be with their families during the weekend.

Even if it wasn't like that, it was an unprecedented situation where the wounded were as much as millions. There were a lot of injuries and there were a lot of people with wounds that still weren't healed.

“My grandfather who was as good as my parent also passed away last year due to illness. At that time, Guild Leader and Department Head Suk gave me a lot of help. They even invited a nursing specialty healer from overseas.”

“Is that so.”

Healers couldn't treat diseases but they were excellent in replenishing energy and reducing pain. Unlike narcotic analgesics, skills didn't have side effects. It being expensive was the biggest drawback.

As the conversation continued, the number of empty alcohol bottles increased. But strangely, I didn't

feel any intoxication. It wasn't that there wasn't any, but I was stuck at the unsatisfying feeling of teetering on the edge of becoming tipsy.

"It seems like you are better at alcohol than you look."

Kim Sunghan said. That wasn't true. My limit wasn't that much. 5 years later, my level went up and through my stats, I was able to hold my alcohol better but right now, I was level 1 so it was normal for my face to flush with one bottle of soju. So why was I okay?

"...It seems I'm drinking well today."

I tilted my head and answered. Why wasn't I drunk? Of course, I wasn't planning on getting completely drunk. If I got close to speaking nonsense and blurted out about my skills, then it would become difficult.

But, I needed to be slightly tipsy for it to be easier to spit out the keyword. I wouldn't be able to say it at all sober.

"Well it is better to not be too drunk. The way I act when I'm drunk is embarrassing."

Still, I laid the groundwork for it first.

"Do you cry?"

"Eh, there's nothing embarrassing about that. The way I act drunk... I confess to anyone."

Without needing to act, I automatically put on an awkward expression.

"There was even a time when I was slapped after a drunken confession."

Of course, that didn't actually happen... there was an instance when I was slapped after confessing when I wasn't drunk and was in my right mind. I still didn't understand why they[11] slapped me when it would've been enough to refuse with words. Did they hate me that much?

"That's quite embarrassing. Among my fellow college students, there was one guy who would grab anybody and push his lips on them when he was drunk. There were a series of victims during reserve days."

...What was reserve? He wouldn't be talking about reserve corps[12].

It was embarrassing to ask so I just sipped soju and passed it over by smiling. Should I also try going to college? I would have enough time so I could study and take the CSAT[13]...

'I'm not even drunk and I'm thinking nonsense.'

What college. But really, why wasn't I drunk? If it was normal, I would have already become blackout drunk[14]. Now that I thought of it, the beer I drank yesterday didn't affect me at all. I thought it was because I only drank half a can.

What was the problem? For items, I only had on the earring that increases Mana, and my skills... was it because of my skills?

'Is Poison Resistance the culprit?'

It was the only suspicious skill. Over a certain amount, alcohol was also considered poison so did it block it? It had toxicity and if you were excessive then it was bad for your body, but still, it wasn't to the extent of poison.

...If it really was because of the Poison Resistance skill, could it be that I couldn't get drunk anymore? It was an eternal farewell from the reasonably uplifting, good feeling of intoxication? That's crazy?

"Your expression doesn't look good, was the alcohol too much in the end?"

"Ah, no. I just thought of... something worrying."

My alcohol! My chicken and beer! The Awakened Person League that would be coming out soon was super fun, but I would have to watch that chaos sober!

'Damn, why did it have to be a passive skill of all things? Could the skill be turned off? I haven't heard that you can turn off passive skills.'

It didn't use up mana so not thinking of turning it off was normal. I didn't think it would turn off in the first place. Would a passive be passive for nothing?

'Still, if it was possible to turn it on and off, it would be great. Couldn't I somehow try it once now? I didn't want to say the keyword in my right mind, only pretending to be drunk. Turn off, Poison Resistance skill. Poison Resistance skill off[15].'

As expected, it doesn't...

[Poison Resistance(L) Skill has been cancelled.]

Clang!

"Han Yoojin-ssi? Are you alright?"

No, I'm no... crazy... I did something stupid. To think that it would actually turn off.

Like a filled dam bursting, the feeling of intoxication flooded in, in one breath. Fuck, it felt like I swallowed a ball of fire... skill, I had to use again...

'Skill name... What was it.....'

What was, it again.....

And then I blacked out[16].

[1] lit. 'how did you come here?' though they usually don't ask this in restaurants bc it's a vague phrase and it's obvious why ppl would go into a restaurant. Maybe it's showing how rattled the server is? Or there's no deeper meaning

[2] 'sunbae' is what you call your upperclassmen or ppl in the same work who are older/more experienced than you. Analogous to jpn 'senpai' I guess

[3] brand of soju

[4] 'army stew', stew made of kimchi, spam, sausages, often instant ramen noodles, etc. Originated during the Korean War, when people would throw in surplus food from army bases. It's a popular anju (which I've tl'd as 'snacks' but are specifically food that accompanies alcohol) and as a regular dish apparently esp in college neighborhoods

[5] cultural note: unlike in the u.s. where it's mostly wings & breast, in korea (according to my dad) thigh meat is the most popular

[6] not really certain about the verb here. I think it might be slang instead of a typo bc when I searched it I found one ex tl instance of it, but then again, it's one (1) ex so not sure. It might be a purposeful

misspelling (as in internet/text speak) of 'to know' or of 'to inform' but yeah idk

[7] he actually uses a compound word with 'set up' and 'conflict' which implies 'a conflict from setting sth up'

[8] it's more like 'team leader/head' (team is the eng word transliterated into krn) but in this case 'team' probably means the '[human resources] team/department' so I didn't think 'team leader' got that across. I've only heard 'team leader' in terms of 'project team leader', so I didn't think it was the best term to tl as. There is another proper term for 'department head' (diff type of department? I think? Idk how companies like that work) but I still thought that this tl would make the most sense.

[9] idk the 'X' was like that, in eng, so I'm assuming it's a censored name or maybe it's just a regular name of a series

[10] he abbreviated the title of 'Hunter Starting Today' so I followed suit in a corresponding manner in eng

[11] once again, bc of the rare usage of pronouns, there weren't any. So I'm using neutral ones even though it's highly likely that the author would've meant 'she'. Too bad, if you wanted me to adhere to your heterosexual agenda, then you should've specified

[12] KSH was saying 예비대 (예비 = reserve), which is normally short for 예비부대 (reserve corps) which is what YJ was thinking of. However, I think he might be talking about 예비대학생 (lit. 'reserve college students') which means prospective students

[13] again, he trails off without the verb so I'm winging it. The CSAT is the College Scholastic Ability Test, which is a standardized test in Korea for getting into college, kind of like the usa SAT but more important for getting into college. I used 'CSAT' in the tl bc YJ also uses the

usual abbrev. (수능 instead of 대학수학능력시험)

[14] lit. 'film got cut off' where 'film' is the eng word (as in movie film) transliterated into krn

[15] 'off' is said in eng transliterated to krn

[16] the 'film was cut' phrase again. It doesn't necessarily mean he lost consciousness, just that he stops retaining memory bc he's so drunk, which I guess is a type of losing consciousness/self-awareness but anywas I'm saying it doesn't mean he passed out. I think 'black out' also doesn't necessarily mean pass out (once again, my only fluent language is failing me) so it works.

Chapter 27: < OFF (3) >

< OFF (3) >

"Han Yoojin-ssi?"

Kim Sunghan worriedly looked at the man across from him at the table.

The glass that had fallen from the man's, Han Yoojin's, hand rolled until it caught against a plate and stopped. The spilled alcohol dripped drop by drop from the table to below.

“Are you alright?”

At the question, Han Yoojin slightly shook his head. Then, he sighed deeply.

“Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

He sighed consecutively and raised his drooping head. Looking at the half unfocused eyes and reddened skin, anyone would be able to tell that he was extremely drunk.

“It seems like you are very drunk. Let’s get up.”

“No, wait.”

Han Yoojin shook his hand in refusal.

Despite being drunk, it was a clear, correctly pronounced voice, so Kim Sunghan soon had a confused expression. Was that person really drunk?

“There is still something I need to do.”

“Something you need to do?”

“Yes, I don’t want to do it but... there is no other choice. Ah, really why this, this kind of.....”

He mumbled something and then rubbed his face with both hands. It was an expression that said he really didn’t want to, so it made you wonder what exactly he was going to do.

“If you tell me in detail, I can help you.”

“Help... um, no. Just please sit still. And please don’t laugh. And please don’t treat me like a crazy guy. You just have to sit solemnly like normal... Yes.”

Then he let out another extremely deep sigh[1].

Han Yoojin took out ice from the pitcher and rubbed it against his cheek with a face that looked like it might even cry. It seemed like he thought he was doing something to recover his senses.

“This really isn’t my real thoughts, Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

“Yes.”

“But still, if it is okay, can you sincerely listen? I, really don’t want to be like that. But I think I

definitely have to speak now with this chance.”

“Please speak.”

Kim Sunghan unconsciously straightened his posture. It certainly seemed as if he was like that because he was drunk, but instead of drunken antics, he seemed too normal.

Could it be that he was about to speak up about actually important things?

The Han Yoojin he had been watching for the last few days was someone who was concealing many secrets. If it weren't for the fact that he was definitely Haeyeon Guild's older brother, he would have been entirely suspicious. Instead of someone who had just registered as an Awakened Person, he knew too much and was too skilled.

You couldn't help but tilt your ear toward him, who was saying that there was something he needed to say, while he was drunk, at the moment when his wariness was peeled off.

“Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

“Yes.”

The tips of Han Yoojin's lips trembled slightly. After hesitating, he finally spilled his innermost thoughts.

“I love you.”

“.....Excuse me?”

Kim Sunghan asked back, with the stupidest expression he'd ever had in his 30 odd years of life. The one phrase that struck his ear couldn't connect to his brain right away and instead felt like it was spinning around nearby.

Continuing, the feelings that burst out were colorful in various ways like fireworks.

It was disconcerting and dumbfounding and even funny. The anticipation had completely collapsed and there was a feeling of disappointment, but at the same time, he felt a humane friendliness from thinking 'that man is also inevitably like that when drunk'.

Overall, it wasn't bad. No, it was quite delightful.

“You really do confess when you are drunk.”

Kim Sunghan swallowed down the belated laugh and said.

“If that was what you need to do, since you've done it, let's go back now.”

“What I have to do? Oh, right.”

Han Yoojin rubbed his face again.

“Did I, by any chance, say I love you?”

At him earnestly asking again, laughter eventually burst out. Kim Sunghan cleared his throat and nodded his head.

“You did.”

“Really? That’s crazy. No, I didn’t mean what Sunghan-ssi said. But, I said I love you?”

“Yes.”

“Really? Then why... oh, it did pop up? When did it pop up?”

After saying the words he[2] couldn’t understand, he dispiritedly laughed hahaha. As Kim

Sunghan looked Han Yoojin doing that, he felt a peculiar feeling of déjà vu.

It was his first time drinking with him. It was definitely the first, but strangely, it wasn't unfamiliar. It felt like he had seen that kind of drunken appearance before.

No, he definitely had seen it before.

Kim Sunghan rooted through his memory. It wasn't a very old memory. He had seen it about two years ago. And before then too, when he was young.

'.....Grandfather.'

Suddenly, it occurred to him. Kim Sunghan took in a small breath.

His grandfather.

An emaciated elder who, when tipsy, would laugh 'huh-huh' while saying 'I love you' to the grandchild his heartless son had thrown away.

The memory of wrinkled hands that were like a piece of wood, that would rub his head and pat his back, vividly rose up.

‘...Even though he is someone almost ten years younger than me. Am I drunk too?’

Looking at the extremely young[3] youth, he remembered the seventy-year-old elder. It was to the point of mixing them up.

But that strange feeling of distance quickly disappeared as if erased with great strength.

Leaving only the deep feelings for the elder who was his excellent guardian.

Of course, it wasn't that Han Yoojin was becoming Kim Sunghan's real grandfather. They were different people. He knew that clearly.

But that didn't matter.

The important thing was the fact that there was someone who he could wholeheartedly believe in, someone who he could occasionally think of and rely on.

In this world where you couldn't even easily trust your flesh and blood, an existence that felt completely safe could only be tempting. And reasons to reject that temptation were eliminated.

Kim Sunghan smiled.

“You seem very drunk.”

He said, straightening up. Han Yoojin gazed up blankly at the Kim Sunghan who was moving towards him.

“...I am sorry but I, have to say that I love you.”

“You have said so.”

“Ah...so I said it. I said it? Shit, that’s not it...”

Kim Sunghan grabbed the arm of the drunk continuing to speak nonsense and helped him up.

Han Yoojin surprisingly walked as if completely fine, without a single wobble. It was to the point that if it weren’t for his nagging about love and dazed eyes, you really wouldn’t be able to tell he was drunk.

“I’m sorry. I’m not like this because I want to be.”

"It's alright."

"Since you said it's alright, I'll just say one more thing."

After saying 'just one more thing', he looked up at the man who was sincerely propping him up.

"I love you."

He was going to laugh it off again. But Kim Sunghan suddenly remembered something.

That unlike when he was younger, he, who had grown up to be a stiff person and emphasized having face, had always passed over the elder's drunk behavior without an answer.

"...Me too."

So he brought out the words he hadn't used since he was in his teens.

"I loved you."

Grandfather.

...My head felt like it was split open. And like some crazy bastard had put his hand through the crack and went wild hitting my brain around.

My head hurt enough to think that nonsense.

My head. Crazy. Exactly what happened before I went to slee...p... Shit.

“Ugh this stupid, ughhh... uh... my head.....”

I was about to shout and stand up when I stopped and buried my face into my pillow again. I-I felt like I was about to die.....

‘So... I turned the skill off.’

This was crazy. Why would a passive skill turn off? Well, in the first place, it wasn’t like the system was like ‘this is a passive skill~’. People just assumed it was passive.

Still, to think that it would turn off. Ughh, first I should turn it on at least.

'Poison Resistance turn on.'

.....What was it. There was no reaction.

'Why didn't it work? Poison Resistance skill ON[4]. You can't hear, system?'

The message window still didn't pop up. What, it couldn't be that it turned off forever. Then I really would have done the stupidest thing in the entire world.

'I said Poison Resistance skill turn on, Poison Resistance skill ON!'

Turn on alrea-.

[Poison Resistance(L) Skill had been activated.]

The message window popped up and at the same time, the headache disappeared as if by magic. My body, which had felt like several lumps of steel were placed on it, lightened. Wow, the skill effect was great. It even took care of the hangover. Surely, a legendary grade.

'But this, do you have to say it twice to turn a passive skill on?'

Was it a type of safeguard? In order to check, Poison Resistance... I definitely couldn't turn it off, and tried to turn off the Fear Resistance.

'Fear Resistance skill turn off, Fear Resistance skill turn off.'

[Fear Resistance(L) Skill has been cancelled.]

Oh, it turned off. Why didn't the system tell you this kind of stuff? Anyways, whoever made this was beyond unkind. Attach an instruction manual at least by now.

'But yesterday... I didn't say anything outrageous while completely drunk, right?'

As my head cleared, I suddenly got worried.

First things first, I was in my bedroom in the Guild dorms. And my clothes... were pajamas. Who changed them? Did I throw up by any chance?

I grabbed my cell phone that was on the table next to the bed. One day had passed, and the time was a little past 10 in the morning.

I wouldn't have calmly blacked out.

Praying, I opened my Status Window, and checked the My Brat is the Best skill.

[My Brat is the Best(L) – The growth rate of the target who becomes influenced after hearing the keyword +100%

Duration time: 3 days

Already influenced target can use without keyword

Overlap use for same target is not allowed

Reuse standby time for the same target: 30 days

Keyword: I love you

※Inapplicable while the target is aware of the effect of the keyword

Influence completed targets(4)

Han Yoohyun(S), Yoo Myeongwoo(F), Bak Yerim(S), Kim Sunghan(A)]

.....Hahaha, crazy.

Kim Sunghan was there. Why was he there? Was it a system error? Say it's an error.

'.....Still, it meant that I didn't say anything about the skill.'

If I had spilled it all while drunk, the skill wouldn't have been applied to Kim Sunghan. ...It wouldn't say something like that it can't retroactively apply, right? I was praying that I didn't say nonsense, please.

I got up and sat down and turned on my cell phone again.

'I should check...'

I didn't want to call. I did say that I tended to confess when I was drunk, but would I have really said 'I love... you' to when I was drunk?

...I probably just calmly said it once, right? I didn't say useless things, right?

I swallowed dryly several times, before grimly pressing the call button. It's okay. Nothing much happened. It's oka...

[Yes, this is Kim Sunghan.]

“H-hello. Sunghan-ssi.”

My voice trembled faintly on its own. It wouldn't have trembled as much as this even when calling a first love after ten years.

“That, by any chance did I, yesterday... come home quietly...?”

Say that I did, please.

Over the cell phone, I heard a small laugh. Fuck. That was ominous.

[Despite being drunk, you were fine.]

“I-is that so?”

Whew, that's really a relief...

[Besides telling me that you love me about thirty times.]

...Thirty ways to kill myself flashed through my head.

That's crazy, what did I do? Couldn't I be returned to the past just one more time? God, please. If you could blow away the drunk idiot with a shotgun, there would be nothing more I could want.

"I've caused you so many... extremely... really a lot, of inconveniences[5]....."

I said, as if my voice was wrung out of me. I was crazy, really. Han Yoojin, you crazy bastard. Saying something that could be done with once, thirty..... Shit.

My nape was burning. I was dying of shame. I felt like I had already died about halfway.

"I'm really sorry... I really, really wasn't in my right mind. It must have been very unpleasant, I would like to wholeheartedly apologize."

[It's alright. It wasn't unpleasant at all.]

.....Sorry?

Immediately my thoughts froze. W-wait? That it wasn't unpleasant, what did you mean? If it

were me I would have been like ‘fuck this crazy bastard, if you’re going to get drunk, get drunk nicely’ and kicked them away, but it wasn’t unpleasant at all?

.....Could it be that it was that preference?

My spine straightened up. I’d rather you get mad. Why was it okay? Please get mad. I want to hear you say ‘crazy bastard’.

“T-that... Still, the location was like that... you must have felt bad.....”

Kim Sunghan laughed. Don’t laugh, I get goosebumps.

[If it was a different person, it might have been annoying and unpleasant. But.]

But, but... but what.

I firmly repressed the urge to throw the cell phone and waited for the following words.

[Hm, you might think this sounds weird, but.]

...Should I throw it at least now. S-something that sounds weird... what is it.

[For some reason, when I look at Han Yoojin-ssi, I think of my deceased grandfather.]

.....Excuse me? W-what? Grandfather? Grandpa[6]?!

[1] lit. 'ground-sinking sigh'

[2] this 'he' refers to KSH and then 2nd 'he' in this sentence refers to YJ

[3] lit. 'deep blue-ly young' but the word for 'deep/clear blue' can also be used to mean 'very young'

[4] said & written in eng, with the capital letters

[5] he's trying to say lit. 'I've had a lot of bad manners' which is a polite way of saying 'excuse me', 'I've inconvenienced you', 'please forgive me for the troubles I've caused you', etc.

[6] both words mean 'grandfather' but the 1st one is a slightly respectful way to referring to (and only referring to, you don't use it to call someone 'grandfather' to their face) someone's grandfather, whereas the 2nd is just a general word that you can also use to call someone.

Chapter 28: < Perfect Caregiver >

< Perfect Caregiver >

“...I am in my thirties, no my twenties, though.”

I said blankly. Grandfather... To think that I would hear that it was a grandfather who was brought to mind when he looked at me. My hair was still black, though. And my skin didn't have a single wrinkle and was smooth. Just how did my appearance bring to mind his grandfather?

[I know. But yesterday, I saw my grandfather in your drunken figure. Grandfather would also say 'I love you' quite often when he was drunk.]

“Ah, that's why...”

Even if you said so, it was still definitely weird! I mean, if a girl you're having a fling with got drunk and said 'I love you', even then would you be like 'grandfather!'? Or grandmother?

“Still, I'm not drunk now and there wouldn't be a reason for me to get drunk, so wouldn't there be no reason I would bring to mind your grandfather?”

Especially since I had no intention of saying something crazy like 'I love you' a second time.

...I felt like I had already done that enough for a lifetime, shit.

[.....That, would be correct.]

Kim Sunghan's voice was unbecomingly full of regret.

[Even so, Yoojin-ssi still feels like my grandfather.]

"I mean, even if you say so..."

[Is that not okay?]

".....Excuse me?"

[I won't say nonsense in front of other people. Simply just calling to say hello and sometimes meeting up would be enough. At any rate, we are in the same Guild, so it wouldn't be inconvenient either.]

.....Was he asking me to play the role of his grandfather? I mean, I really didn't understand. Did something go wrong with the alcohol that was drunk yesterday? Exactly how was his head structured that when he heard a drunk person say 'I love you', he would think of the grandfather who raised... hi.....

‘...Wait. If it’s the grandfather who raised him.’

Caregiver.

I told the ‘I love you’ keyword to Kim Sunghan when I was drunk.

Kim Sunghan heard the keyword and thought of his grandfather.

Not his parents or friends, or even a lover, but the person who cared for him.

And then, he saw that caregiver and me superimposed.

The pieces of the puzzle slotted into place one by one.

As weird as it was, I thought of Yerim who looked at me with a sense of closeness. And I thought of Yoo Myeongwoo who kept on clinging.

And the attitude of the dongsaeng who excessively tried to protect me, starting from the moment the skill was applied...

‘.....Crazy, what is this.’

The puzzle was put together but my head became even more dizzy.

It fit together too well to deny it by saying it didn’t make sense. From Yoohyun to Kim Sunghan, the weirdly changed attitudes were all explained.

The Perfect Caregiver title’s, or the My Brat skill’s, hidden effect. Making influenced people regard me as the worthiest caregiver they knew, if it was that kind of crazy thing.

[Han Yoojin-ssi? If you happen to dislike it...]

“N-no. It’s alright.”

I gripped my head that was heating up and spoke vaguely.

“I still have a hangover left, so... I’m going to go wash my face.”

[Is your condition very bad? You should go get an IV at least.]

“No, I’m fine. I just have to splash myself with some cold water.”

[The day is hot, but still, cold water is-.]

“I’m fine. I’m really fine. I’m still in my twenties. Then I’ll hang up now.”

I forcefully ended the call with Kim Sunghan, who kept on worrying over me as if faced with an elder over seventy years old.

In the silence that fell, I kept on tugging on my bangs.

First of all... let’s organize things.

Organize... organize.....

‘.....What kind of crazy guy was the bastard who made the system?!’

If this was really a game, fuck, all the platforms and communities would leave one star and write harsh reviews that were twenty pages of A4 paper in length.

I didn’t know if it was a skill effect or a title effect. Looking at the keyword application, it seemed like skill, but the effect fit the Perfect Caregiver title to a T.

Ah, I don't know. Anyways, so what.

I let out a couple sighs and settled my heart.

'First of all... when the keyword is applied, thinking of me as the person who was the caregiver..... that's what it seems like, right?'

Kim Sunghan, like I just heard, thought of the grandfather who raised him, because of me.

For Yoohyun's case, I was already his caregiver, so it seemed like his feelings about me became even more agitated. If you say the worry and uneasiness doubled, it would be enough to try confining me abruptly.

No, it was too well behaved of a reaction for double. And he loosened up a little now. Since it was the same person, it wasn't as much as double, but maybe it was 0.5 added?

'I thought the kid suddenly became weird.'

So it was because of my skill, or my title. I'm sorry I misunderstood you, Yoohyun.

Yoo Myeongwoo... openly clinging was probably like a hyung. His attitude was definitely not

like treating a parent.

And finally, Yerim.

‘.....Is it dad?’

The possibility of it being dad was the highest. ...I wanted to think it was the highest.

But usually kids... especially girls.....

No, there were daughters who were close to their dads. Yerim’s father alone could have been family-oriented. It could have been that her mother was the sole breadwinner and she was raised by her dad. It must have been like that. It had to have been like that.

‘It wasn’t really... like treating me like a mom, right?’

That’s right, if she thought of me as her mom, when Yoo Myeongwoo was clinging, she wouldn’t have ended it with ‘it’s disgusting’ and would have notified the police. It was because it was dad, that she finished it with ‘it’s disgusting’. It had to be.

I sighed deeply and turned on the My Brat is the Best skill window. And then carefully searched it.

[※Inapplicable while the target is aware of the effect of the keyword]

What caught me was this sentence.

Before, I passed it over without thinking about it much, but knowing the new effect, it felt completely different.

‘Did ‘aware of the effect of the keyword’ mean ‘the other person notices the reason they think of me as their caregiver’?’

If I confessed ‘actually your feelings are brainwashing by my skill~’ to someone who regarded me as something like a parent, then they would definitely feel betrayed. If I lost their trust, then I would lose the qualification to be a perfect caregiver – was it something like that?

‘If I was caught by Yoohyun, it would be okay, and if you think of the things I’ve done for Yoo Myeongwoo, then it might go over reasonably well.’

Bak Yerim and Kim Sunghan were the problems.

Of course, if I wasn’t caught, then that was that. It was as much as an L-Rank title and a L-Rank skill. To feel something wrong, you had to have a Mental stat of about SSS-Rank. So,

if I was careful with what I said, the possibility of the influenced targets realizing the keyword's effect was nonexistent.

...And getting drunk, definitely wouldn't happen. Should I gag myself when I sleep? So I don't sleep talk.

'Maybe I really should use it only for monsters and not people. If we couldn't communicate, wouldn't it be safe?'

Saying 'I love you' was scary. From now on I wouldn't be able to confes..... huh?

W-wait. If I happened to find a woman I really love, what would happen?

'The moment I confess, oppa[1] becomes dad...?'

On top of that, I could become mom.

Right when I say 'I sincerely love you', the other person's cheeks blush and 'yeah, I love mom too~' kind of crazycrazycrazyreallyfuckingcrazy what is this!!!

'I-it's okay. I just have to not say 'I love you'.'

For my whole life. As a mistake, while asleep, even carelessly I couldn't.

Carelessly loosen my tongue[2] just once, and one morning while living together all lovey dovey, my wife is like 'mom, sorry. But mom is mom' and leave the house and meet a new man – that kind of terrible situation could happen.

And then come to greet me with the groom-to-be. And ask to sit at the family seats at the wedding hall? And light the candle[3]? And the husband of the woman who was my wife bows[4] like he's my son-in-law or something? Huh?

This kind of story wouldn't even appear in a shitty drama.

Cold sweat kept on flowing so much that it felt like it might even come from my eyes.

'If I really find someone I want to be with for the rest of my life, let's just cut off my tongue.'

I would unhesitatingly cut it, damn. Just say that there was an accident when I went into a dungeon. ...What if Yoohyun brings over a healer. Regrowing a tongue, even an A-Rank could probably do. Did I have to become a crazy guy who refuses treatment?

.....Ah I don't know, I really don't know. Anyways for 5 year from now on my dating luck was zero. Let's not think about it.

‘Low ranking skills didn’t have these many things added...’

Then again, even A-Ranks had effects with no explanations, so an L-Rank would probably have more. Still, it wasn’t like looking for a landmine. It was to the effect of being scared to use the skill.

‘Shouldn’t you explain these important effects? You just had to add just one more line. Even something brief like ‘the other person starts to regard the skill user as a caregiver’.’

Perfect Caregiver, My Brat, growth buff, I love you, influence. It gave a hint in its own way, but how could you expect me to deduce with just that? I’m not some Sherlock Holmes.

Seeing your blue tie, this morning you ate bean soup and recently broke up with your lover and just quit smoking and are left-handed wow!

Let’s just raise magic beasts. It’s safe and peaceful.

I organized my thoughts and got up from my bed. Wait, it felt like I forgot something.

‘Oh, right.’

I sent Kim Sunghan a text to please come see me once just prior to going into a dungeon. Since the skill was applied, I should promote his growth at least. And... there was nothing besides that, right?

My hangover had disappeared but my head hurt dully. I had to get the novice Hunter training so I should get ready to wash and go out. What time was it? It was definitely 10 in the morni... ack I was late!

"It was changed to 2 in the afternoon."

When I hurriedly kicked my room door open and went out, Yoo Myeongwoo poked his head out the kitchen and spoke.

"Before that, that cat was restless starting from last night-."

"Cat? Peace?"

"When you came back to the house, you were unconscious and had to be carried in. So I think he was alarmed."

Oh dear. Then again, you couldn't communicate with him so you couldn't explain that I was slightly dazed because I was drunk.

I quickly ran to the living room. I saw the figure of a small animal curled right next to the glass door instead of in his comfortable sleeping place.

“Peace!”

-Kooeueung, keueung! Keeang!

As soon as he saw me, Peace scratched the glass and whined plaintively. There, there. Our baby. You must have worried a lot.

I quickly opened the door and embraced the clinging Peace.

“You were really alarmed, right? It’s okay, I’m sorry. Things like that won’t happen from now on.”

-Gyareureung

“Right, right. Our Peace.”

If I get plastered again, I’m a dog, a dog.

“Here.”

Yoo Myeongwoo came over with a tray with cups. But why were there four cups? The colors of the drinks were slightly different too.

“What is it, that?”

“Hangover cure drinks. They were bought by, from the most lefthand side, your dongsaeng, Kim Sunghan-ssi, Bak Yerim-yang, and me.”

My heart was thankful but I didn’t need them.

“As you see, I’m fine, so I don’t need to drink.”

“They said they would check that you drank, though.”

“Who?”

“All three of them.”

I mean, why would they check even this... Alright, as the one who used his skill while not knowing it well, it was my fault. It wasn’t something difficult and I just had to drink, so I was reaching out my hand when I stopped.

“You’re not going to tell which one I drank first, right?”

“If they ask, I think I’d have to tell them though...”

Yoo Myeongwoo said unconfidently. Then again, what strength did you have that you would refuse?

Let’s see, Kim Sunghan would be fine. But that dongsaeng and Yerim were the problem. They’d already gone one round.

I did think that they probably wouldn’t fight again over this, but just in case.

After a short consideration, I held up the drink that Yoohyun sent first. In these cases, it was best to side with the strongest guy.

“But anyways, do you have a hyung that you’re close to?”

I asked, emptying the last glass. I was still half guessing about the skill effect, so I had to check for certain.

“Hyung? I don’t? I only have noonas who are a lot older than me.”

...It wouldn’t be noona, right? Seeing him cling, it seemed like it might. It was better than mom, but I hated noona too.

“Were you close... to your noonas?”

“No, not at all.”

Whew, that was a relief.

“Then, with your parents?”

Yoo Myeongwoo smiled bitterly and shook his head.

“If I did, I wouldn’t have had any need to stamp a slave contract. I did get a lot of allowance when I was young. Back then, the conditions in the house was good. Still, both my parents worked so it was hard to even see my parents’ faces, and my noonas would leave me out and then later treat me like a servant. It’s been a long time since they all married so we aren’t in contact.”

If it wasn’t family, then just who did he think of me as? Relatives? Teacher? Some adult neighbor?

“Um, by any chance is there anyone who you think of when you see me?”

I just asked openly. Myeongwoo put on a puzzled expression.

“There isn’t?”

There wasn’t? What, did I happen to guess wrong?

“By any chance, during your life, was there someone who gave you the most help or was the only one you could depend on? There should have been at least one.”

“Of course there is.”

Yoo Myeongwoo continued, a little bashfully.

“It’s you, Yoojin.”

“...Me?”

“That’s right. Of course, you. Who else would there be besides you? Putting aside the matter at the Association, coming to save someone from where thugs were gathered, even their flesh and blood would probably hesitate? As for my family, they definitely would have pretended they didn’t know.”

Hearing that, it was correct at least.

But, saving Yoo Myeongwoo was after the keyword was applied, and before that I had just spoken a few words to him. It definitely wasn’t at the level of being treated like a caregiver.

Was it that if there wasn’t a proper caregiver, the effect application also didn’t work?

‘If I think about it, I also don’t have someone I could call a caregiver.’

Of course it wasn’t that there weren’t any who had looked after me. But unlike Yoohyun and Kim Sunghan, there weren’t any who I had placed my affections and who I could think of and was thankful to.

No matter how impressive of a L-Rank skill, title it was, it couldn’t forcefully make something that didn’t exist and display the effect. So Yoo Myeonwoo genuinely liked me and clung...

“Why did you suddenly draw back? Do you still have a hangover?”

“Huh? Yeah, a little...”

I wanted to maintain an appropriate distance for my privacy and mental health.

‘Then in the end, there’s just Yerim left.’

For Yoohyun, it was just that the extent got more severe, and he was still treating me as his hyung so checking was impossible, so only Yerim was left.

...Dad, please dad. I believe in you, Yerim. I believe in you, who definitely must have been family-oriented, Yerim’s father.

[1] since ‘oppa’ is what girls call older boys they are close to, it’s a sign of closeness (if you’re not related) and so a lot of girls call their boyfriends ‘oppa’. Also, dad (‘appa’) sounds close to ‘oppa’

[2] lit. ‘move tongue wrongly’

[3] lighting the candles in a wedding is usually done by the parents, esp mothers, of the couple being wedded

[4] where you kneel down and bow as a sign of respect. Often in in specific traditional ceremonies, including weddings.

Chapter 29: < Dokkaebi[1] (1) >

< Dokkaebi[1] (1) >

After washing up and changing clothes and eating breakfast and lunch combined, somehow my head became cool. Though my heart felt like it was beating faster than normal.

I thought my hangover had disappeared but maybe it didn't? How should I say it, it felt like my Mental stat was reduced.

'Though I guess it would be like that after realizing an unexpected skill effect from yesterday's events.'

But it was still a little weird.

First, let's sort it out.

1. I couldn't ever tell anyone at all about the keyword's effect.

There weren't many in the world I could hang my life on and trust. It'd be one thing if I

were able to read minds, but how would you completely know someone else's intentions?

If they didn't have a history of risking their life to save me, like Yoohyun, then I couldn't ever immediately trust them.

My stats were F-Rank.

I had to always remember that and be careful. I was a weakling who would go to heaven[2] if a passing S-Rank hit me, if I put myself forward just because I had an L-Rank skill.

2. When I used the keyword, I had to be cautious to the utmost.

Right now, there were only four people, but from now on, if I kept on using the same keyword, anyone could notice something. More than anything, using it somewhere where there were a lot of people, like yesterday, was definitely forbidden.

If it was that simply the growth skill application would be impossible if the keyword was discovered, then I would be able to afford it, but if the mental brainwashing came to light, then there would obviously be a huge fuss.

So, if I had to use the keyword, I had to mix in several other words 1:1 in order to be safe.

3. Prioritizing monsters over people, I had to find S-Rank level magic beasts to protect me as

soon as possible.

Even after 5 years, there weren't any instances of monsters who could communicate with humans. So, I didn't have to worry about the skill effect disappearing for Peace and the monster that I would receive later.

If I kept two S-Rank monsters near me, I would be able to relax about my personal matters.

4. Finally, let's not take the damn system lightly. I didn't know if there might be another trap hidden, so let's be careful, very careful.

'If I were stat S-Rank, I wouldn't have needed to worry this much.'

It was definitely too much. Ah, I was about to feel mentally weak again. Why was I like this today of all days? It was a feeling like I had taken off and thrown the armor that I was wearing.

...Was it because I overloaded my liver?

'Let's go get training at least.'

It would probably get better after I rest for a day or two. As expected, excessive drinking was bad for the body.

“Ahjussi!”

When I went outside, Yerim, who had already gone out and was waiting, happily greeted me. Maybe she had gotten expert styling, because today’s clothes were refreshing and cute.

“I heard you were really drunk, are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“That’s a relief. Please don’t drink a lot. It’s not good for your body.”

Even so, I was feeling something bad in real time. See, my heart was pounding again.

I should ask while Yoo Myeongwoo hadn’t come out yet.

“Yerim, say...”

I was wondering what to do, but there weren’t people listening so I asked directly.

“Is there anyone you think of when you look at me?”

“S-someone I think of?”

Flustered, Yerim’s eyes darted around. Bingo. There was.

“Th-that’s... That is, I was trying not to show it.....”

“It’s okay. Say it.”

It was okay as long as you didn’t say mom.

“When I was young... when I was living in a house, there was an ahjussi next door who looked after me.”

Ahjussi! Hooray! Yerim’s next door ahjussi whose name I didn’t know, thank you.

“He was younger than ahjussi, but back then I was also younger. Mom said he was a next-door student, but I saw him as a fully grown adult, so I just called him an ahjussi. It wasn’t that he resembled ahjussi, he was sickly. Enough to make my young self worry.”

Yerim's gaze was towards me, but it seemed to be looking at the past. She continued speaking, thinking of an old memory.

"Our house was on the nicer side, but the next-door house was even bigger and nicer. The yard was pretty too. There was a white swing, and a large dog. Ahjussi's body was weak so he didn't go out of his house much. Instead he played with me almost everyday."

"You must have liked him a lot."

Yerim nodded her head hard.

"Yes. I really liked him a lot. Back then, I spent more time with ahjussi instead of mom or dad. My dad was busy and my mom went to do church volunteer work with the lady[3] next door since I got along well with ahjussi."

So was that why that ahjussi... student became the most influential caregiver? It might have been different if Yerim's parents had continued to live, but they passed away early.

"And I thought that once I grew up later, I would be stronger than ahjussi, so I would protect him..."

She trailed off. I didn't have to hear the following words to guess.

After holding back either tears or a sigh, Yerim looked up at me with an uneasy glint in her eyes.

"It definitely makes you feel bad right? When I look at ahjussi, I think of someone else... Usually, people don't like that."

"No, it's okay. It's not like it's a criminal; you said it's someone you like. Rather, it feels good because you think that way about me?"

Of course, there were a lot of people who would feel bad, but in my case, but I brought it onto myself. Even though he was sickly, he was a nice wealthy male student, so it was enough to be thankful.

At my words, Yerim was relieved and smiled widely.

"Really? As expected, ahjussi is also a good person. I thought you would be good natured since the first time I saw you!"

...Even though you yelled about statutory rape.

"Do you by any chance remember when you first thought of that ahjussi when you saw

me?”

“Yes. At the steakhouse, after you talked gibberish. That easygoing-looking appearance seemed familiar.”

If it was after I talked gibberish, it was right after I said the ‘I love you’ keyword.

As expected, it definitely was the effect due to the keyword influence.

“I will definitely protect ahjussi!”

“Okay, thanks.”

Yerim clung on like normal, but one side of my heart became cold unlike normal. Thinking that it was all due to the skill, I was a little afraid.

...At any rate, if I was careful, there wouldn’t be any problem, so why was I worrying in advance? Was it really because of my liver? Because I was screwed up all last night? Or was there a different reason-.

Suddenly

“Did you wait long?”

Yoo Myeongwoo opened the door and came out.

“No, not really. Let’s go. We’ll be late.”

Since today was theory class, I should listen a reasonable amount and come back early and rest.

The novice Hunter theory classroom was smaller than I had expected. Unlike the Association facilities that could admit several hundreds of people, there were exactly only five desks and chairs. Then again, it would be surprising if Haeyeon, which was picky about screening rank ability, took in more than five novices at once. Even now, the only real newcomer was just Yerim.

‘The chair’s comfortable.’

It must have been expensive.

A short while after we each sat at our seats, the person in charge of the theory class appeared. The person who opened the door and came in was a woman in her early twenties wearing light sandals and a long tropical one-piece dress.

There was an air of being immediately about to go off to summer vacation, so was she really the person in charge of class? And it felt like I had seen that face wearing round glasses before, too.

“Hello.”

The woman standing in front of the lecture podium put down the materials she brought and spoke.

“I am Suk Hayan. I am the person in charge of your theory class today.”

Suk Hayan! When I heard her name, I remembered. The expert on dungeon studies, Doctor White[4].

She was a young genius who had originally studied dungeons and Awakened People with her statistics major before going to the U.S. and playing a large role in discovering the laws governing dungeon formation.

She looked younger than the appearance I had seen on TV, so I didn’t recognize her right away. I remembered her being older than me, but with her make-up and clothes different, she had a total baby face.

Why was that kind of impressive person here? It was the time when she was still in Korea, but she wasn't at a level where she would train novices.

"First, I will talk[5] about the basic knowledge of dungeons."

Suk Hayan placed printouts on each desk. Then, she stopped and stood in front of my desk. Behind the round glasses lenses, the two also round eyes looked straight down at me.

What was it?

"...Do you have something to tell me?"

"You are Han Yoojin-ssi, correct?"

She said, as if she was waiting.

"Yes. That is correct."

"I heard a lot about you from Uncle, I mean Haeyon's head of human resources."

...Head of human resources? Uncle? Now that I thought of it, their surnames were the same. No, before that, what did you hear a lot about? Suk Simyeong, that ahjussi, guaranteed that he would keep things more secure than Guild Leader's personal information; was he not able to bear it and opened his mouth? On top of that, something that wasn't verified since it was still before the dungeon attack?

He wasn't that kind of person.

"I don't know what you have heard, but Department Head Suk overestimates me a little."

"It seems like you are being modest. He isn't someone who would overestimate. He's very particular."

Suk Hayan said, beaming. Well, that ahjussi was indeed particular. Still, I was right that he was exaggeratedly mistaken about me.

"I wasn't being modest. Before that, could you tell me what he said about me?"

"I heard that you were knowledgeable about Awakened People and dungeons, enough to make him completely surprised."

So he really didn't say things about being able to know dungeons types ahead of time. It

was a relief I didn't assess him incorrectly. I regained my composure and replied with a smile.

"As expected, it really is an excessive compliment? If you happened to deliberately come find me because of what you heard from Department Head Suk, I feel apologetic."

"I came to Haeyeon to meet the Dokkaebi. Of course, undertaking the training was because of Han Yoojin-ssi."

"You wouldn't be speaking of real dokkaebi, so are you speaking of a Hunter?"

"Yes. A Hunter famous for special skills."

If it was the Dokkaebi, then I also knew a lot about them. No, I couldn't say that I knew a lot.

Like the nickname, they wore a dokkaebi mask and clothes that seemed like they were from a traditional madangguk[6], and this special Hunter didn't reveal their age and gender, much less their name, even 5 years later.

The reason why he, or possibly she[7], who wasn't registered at the Association at all, was famous was exactly because of those special skills.

Mid-range teleportation and hiding.

Unlike instant movement[8] that couldn't pass over blocked places, teleportation let you move in and out of anywhere. And since hiding was added, they really were something elusive that suited a dokkaebi.

'Their way of living was good too.'

Being able to secretly go inside anywhere was an incredibly threatening ability. If you rashly showed it, you could become everyone's target of attack at any time.

But the Dokkaebi boldly revealed their ability to the world.

'I have all sorts of secrets bundled away, but because I'm safe, I will never release them.'

With that kind of announcement.

In the first place, they were a Hunter who was extremely hard to catch because of their skill's characteristics. But now, far from attacking, it had become a situation where they had to be protected. Since there was no person in the world, especially organizations, that didn't conceal secrets.

Thanks to that, the Dokkaebi wasn't affiliated with anywhere and acted freely. They rarely

attacked dungeons, and instead, they played the role of a messenger who delivered important objects and letters and such.

Since they could figure out any secret, they were somebody who could relax more than anybody else.

‘And after a few years, it was brought to light that they could make ultra-long-distance movement portals.’

There was an uproar saying that they should be a dokkaebi king or god instead of just a dokkaebi. Since it was a rather useful ability, they became extremely sought after[9], but the Dokkaebi didn’t use it except for rescue use.

Of course during dungeon breaks, but they also saved many people in various natural disasters, so that their fame and approval ratings were through the roof[10].

Even though their personality was a little weird, they were a kind person and an impressive one.

“I didn’t know they were at Haeyeon. I would like to meet them once too?”

“There is no reason that can’t be possible. If you converse with me about this and that until the meeting time.”

“Aren’t you holding a class, instructor[11]?”

“You speak exactly like a professor.”

Suk Hayan rolled her eyes slightly and went up onto the podium.

Her continuing lecture content was considerably excellent. She had an incredible understanding about dungeons and about Awakened People, and her explanations were easy and nice to hear, as if they were slipping into our ears[12]. And she was skilled at using audiovisual materials.

It was to the extent that I would unconsciously focus even on things I already knew. Still, there were a few points that she got wrong. No matter how hard she studied, the materials were the amount from 3 years, so it could only be worse than the amount from 8 years.

“With this, the novice Hunter theory class is concluded. Our professor, thank you for listening to this lacking content.”

...Why professor again. To someone who hadn’t even stepped over the threshold of a college.

“It wasn’t lacking at all. The lecture was incredibly masterful. It was easy to listen to, and also

easy to understand.”

Since she called me a professor, I gave my assessment. Then Suk Hayan rolled her eyes again.

“I am thankful for your praise, but at times you had an expression like you were saying that it was wrong. Your gaze was somehow exactly like my major professor, so that it felt like I had gone back to my undergraduate days.”

Was I like that?

“The very first time was when I was explaining about Awakening. Awakening usually occurs when you feel personally threatened, and initial skills are effects that are for protecting oneself. That part.”

She was sharp-witted and had a good memory. Then again, she had the title of ‘genius’.

I sheepishly smiled.

“It wasn’t completely wrong. It was mostly correct. But Awakening initial skills are usually...”

“Usually?”

Suk Hayan widened her eyes. It was an expression that was urging for the following words. Was it okay to easily disclose it like this? Though it wasn't particularly important information.

“I see it as divided between aptitude and environment. Rather than being for protecting oneself, there are many skills that can't be immediately used for combat.”

“However, aren't most of them combat and combat assistance?”

“It is most of them, not all of them. And, the environment was so that most would be like that. If you check, the proportion of Awakened People with skills unrelated to combat would have increased recently.”

Of course, ‘huk, stand up, me, you might die!’ situations were the easiest to Awaken in, so combat skills would still take up the majority. But now, when dungeons rarely burst open, the proportion of people Awakening in everyday life could only increase.

A while ago, even the Hunter Association had someone who had a seafishing skill and an earthworm-calling skill.

Suk Hayan closed her mouth for a short while and wrinkled her forehead, before nodding her head.

“Okay, I will check. And the second time you quirked your lips was...”

“Wait please. Are you perhaps going to check them one by one?”

“I don’t have time, but I can make some, and Han Yoojin-ssi has a lot of time left over.”

“It’s not time left for Suk Hayan-ssi to use.”

Suk Hayan put on an expression wondering what she should do.

“...Is there something you want? Should I pay something like research funds?”

“I just want to rest, though.”

“I will get you a 5-star hotel room. A suite with a good view.”

Why was a hotel coming up? My room also had a good view.

‘What should I do?’

Solidifying closeness wouldn't be a bad thing. Though she would be going to the U.S. later... Wait, if I happened to give her a hint, would she be able to figure out the laws of dungeon formation in Korea? Hm... the number of dungeons was too lacking for that.

The number of dungeons was proportional to the population and the area of territory. So, in order to continue researching the laws of dungeon formation, which required a lot of data, Suk Hayan had no choice but to go abroad. Since there were no places that would allow a foreigner to investigate their dungeons.

The royalties were no joke, so it was a waste. Was there no way to get her to research here?

"Since I want to meet the Dokkaebi, please let me meet with them for at least a short while. I can't answer everything."

"Really? Thank you!"

Suk Hayan delightedly clapped her hands. Was she that pleased?

[1] dokkaebi are mythical creatures from krn folklore, and the closest eng equiv would be goblins I guess.

[2] i.e. 'die'. It's lit. 'cross the Jordan River' from the Bible, where crossing the Jordan River gets you to the promised land, but as the saying evolved, 'promised land' became 'heaven' and thus it just means 'die'.

[3] Ahjumoni (pronounced 'ah-joo-muh-nee') which is another (slightly more respectful) way of saying ahjumma, the female equiv. of ahjussi

[4] 'doctor white' is said in eng transliterated into krn. 'Hayan' also means 'white' in krn.

[5] technically she says 'teach' but nobody really says that in eng, when teachers talk it's always 'I'll talk about...'. Idk if this warrants a footnote, but just fyi since I tend to tweak little things like that here and there

[6] 마당극 (pronounced 'ma-dang-geuk') is a traditional performance performed on a big house's front yard (madang)

[7] the raws say specifically 'he, or maybe she' (specifically, as in pronouns are rarely used but they were used here, probably bc the sentence structure called for it) which is why I used that instead of the 'they' I'm otherwise using unless the text specifies.

[8] both the words for 'teleportation' (lit. 'spatial movement') and 'instant movement' (the same word used to describe BYR's flight skill) mean 'teleportation', but I used the literal tl for 'instant mvmt' to differentiate

[9] lit. 'there were a lot of love calls' where 'love call' is eng transliterated into krn as konglish slang

[10] lit. 'to the extent of piercing the sky'

[11] actually, he calls her person-in-charge-nim, but that doesn't really work in eng.

[12] lit. 'as if [they] were being embedded 쓱쓱 in [our] ears' where 쓱쓱 (ssok-ssok) is an onomotopeia-ish word that doesn't really have a tl/meaning but is used, among other things, when something is easy to understand/remember

Chapter 30: < Dokkaebi (2) >

< Dokkaebi (2) >

Yerim went off for other plans and I sent Yoo Myeongwoo back up first.

When it was just the two of us, Suk Hayan and me, left, my heart fluttered a little. I didn't know how long it had been since I was alone with a woman who had favorable feelings towards me. ...Was it the first?

Even though Suk Hayan was full of passion for learning.

With her eyes shining, she drew a dungeon entrance on a piece of paper. She drew terribly.

"It's surprising that you can guess a dungeon's saturation state by calculating the entrance's

shape and mana distribution. Right now, it's simply calculating the average, so from time to time, there are cases where attacks have to be started quickly. Since, there are only indicators that are green for dungeons that have appeared within three days, and red for dungeons that are one day away from a break."

"It's only a guess right now. There isn't enough data to be sure. Especially since there aren't a lot of dungeons in Korea."

At my words, Suk Hayan sighed regretfully.

"That's true! There's too little. Ah, though I would be hit by rocks if I say something like that outside. Still, it's a pity that I can't investigate a few more dungeons."

"If you investigate, compile statistics of many dungeons, you might discover something new."

"Exactly! I mean, I don't know why most countries don't let foreigners investigate. It's not like we're saying we'll do attacks, just search around. Honestly, shouldn't the whole world cooperate for this? If we understand more about dungeons, people can become much safer!"

After yelling with pent up frustration, Suk Hayan looked at me with deeply moved eyes.

"Yoojin-ssi is the first who I've communicated so well with! The general opinion is the theory

that dungeons are random disasters that are impossible to predict. But, to think that I would meet someone who says there are rules and that we should check and investigate, even research.”

She suddenly grabbed my hand and pushed her face closer. No, wait.

“Won’t you set up a lab with me?”

“...I decline.”

“Why? If it’s us two, we could definitely discover many things!”

Like uncle, like niece; she acted similar to Suk Simyeong.[1]

“I just work with my hands and know things superficially[2], so I can’t sit in front of a desk and rack my brains.”

“That’s okay. You can keep on working with your hands. I will take care of all the theorems. Statistics are my specialty!”

“I left high school with the GED, so my academic background is...”

“That’s not a problem. I have the qualification to be a professor. I was thinking of establishing a dungeon- or Awakened People-related department with connections. I will become the friendliest professor in the world for you. I just pass theses too!”

Saying she would establish a department with connections, she must be a young lady[3] from an impressive family. Getting a college diploma for nothing was tempting, but I didn’t have any intention of studying now.

On top of that, if I was involved with someone who would become a dungeon studies expert for a long time, I would be robbed in a moment. Just acting like we know each other sometimes would be better.

“I’m sorry, but I have more interest in something else now, so I don’t want to research dungeons and Awakened People.”

“...Something else?”

“Yes. I’m thinking of studying about monsters.”

As I raised them, it would probably become studying too.

“Monsters...”

After faintly mumbling, Suk Hayan suddenly put on a tragic expression.

“Han Yoojin-ssi’s lab and my lab, let’s collaborate.”

“I don’t have a lab. I also don’t plan on making one. I’m just raising one magic beast.”

“You’re raising one? Already? Wow, definitely a researcher who works with his hands!”

It was when Suk Hayan was making a fuss about emulating me.

Tak!

“Huh?”

Suddenly, the lights went off. It was a basement with no windows and now that even the hallway’s lights had turned off entirely, you couldn’t see even one inch in front of you.

Was it a blackout?

“The lights must have gone out.”

“It seems so. I’ll turn on my cell phone flashlight.”

I took my cell phone out of my pocket and pressed the home button. As the faint light came on, I could see the face of Suk Hayan, who was standing in front of me.

More than being alarmed, it was a face frozen with shock.

“...Suk Hayan-ssi?”

Why was she suddenly like this? Looking at her in the cell phone light, she looked really frighte-

“Ahhh!!”

“Wh-what is it?!”

At the ear-splitting shriek, I was suddenly surprised[4]. Startled, I reflexively turned and looked back.

A blueish[5] bloody face was floating in a fog-like ambience. The eyes rolled to the whites met my eyes.

F-fuck...

Clangclangclang!

The chairs and desks shook. The printouts on top of the lecture podium fluttered.

“Ahh! Mom!!”

With Suk Hayan’s scream, I[6] sank down to the floor. It wasn’t that I lost strength in my legs, but that I fell because the chair shoo... shit, how could you not scream! What is this... Ghosts don’t exist... There are monsters in dungeons so do ghosts exist...?

Wait before that, I had the Fear Resistance skill so why was my entire body trembling and why was I scared to the point of tear... ah.

I turned it off. I turned it off and didn’t turn it back on. Was I stupid?

I quickly reactivated the Fear Resistance skill. Immediately, my heart stabilized.

‘Was the poor condition in the morning also because I turned off the skill?’

The skill explanation was only coercion nullification, but since it was an L-Rank skill, the possibility of having other effects was high. And it was passive, so it might have been increasing mental strength[7] in everyday life.

But I wasn't originally mentally weak, so to think that I would be overwhelmed with anxiety just because I turned off the skill. Was that why they said you didn't know what you had until it was gone?

"Suk Hayan-ssi!"

I picked up the cell phone I dropped and turned on the flashlight and went towards Suk Hayan. She, who was flopped down on the floor, looked as if her soul had left halfway.

"Are you okay?"

As soon as I lightly shook her shoulders, she moved limply before completely collapsing. She was breathing normally, so did she simply faint? Holding her, I yelled.

"Stop! Dokkaebi!"

There would be no way a ghost would appear, especially showing that exaggerated performance.

As soon as my head cooled, I thought of the suspect.

It was the Dokkaebi.

The dokkaebi that liked to play pranks, especially scaring people.

“Okay, okay. Don’t get mad~.”

An androgynous voice, that you couldn’t tell was male or female, playfully said. Then, the hallway lights and the classroom lights turned on.

“You said you wanted to meet me so I came.”

Snickering, a figure appeared on top of a desk. It was person wearing a red dokkaebi mask and a blue dopo[8]. That guy was swinging around a model of bloody blue face.

“Was I a bit too harsh? I didn’t know she’d faint. Really. Usually, I adjust well but it’s been a while so maybe that’s why.”

“Thankfully, it doesn’t seem like she’s hurt, but...”

I looked up at the Dokkaebi. It was my first time actually seeing them. They weren’t

particularly tall, but they weren't short either. Eccentric and mischevious, but a virtuous person.

A Hunter with mid-range teleportation, hiding, and later ultra-long-distance portal, who wasn't affiliated with anywhere.

I wanted it[9].

And now, when just these two were in front of me, if I could recieve that person's help.

'I could investigate dungeons.'

Suk Hayan didn't need to go all the way to the U.S. and could discover the laws of dungeon formation here.

'...The Dokkaebi that likes to play around. The Dokkaebi that scares people but is said to be trustable with your life.'

This was a chance.

I mockingly smirked and said provocatively.

“Why don’t you stop with that joke that isn’t scary at all?”

“What?!”

The Dokkaebi jumped.

“Not scary at all?! Even though you were so frightened you turned pale! Even though you collapsed because your legs lost strength and trembled so!”

“You must have seen wrong. Since it was dark.”

“No I didn’t? I saw it? I saw it all perfectly?”

Towards the upset Dokkaebi, I followed suit and put on a choked-up expression and deliberately stuttered.

“Th-that’s. I just didn’t expect it.”

“So you were scared! If you had expected it, would you have been scared? Scaredy cat~ scaredy cat~.”

“If I had expected it, then of course I wouldn’t have been scared! Honestly, your joke is childish.”

“Childish! It’s a classic!”

The Dokkaebi stomped their feet. Should I slowly reel in the bait[10]?

“Then should we make a bet?”

“A bet? A bet is good, a bet! On what?”

“If you can’t scare me, acknowledge that I’m more impressive than you! And hm... playing the part of my subordinate for 3 years.”

They were slightly childish words but the Dokkaebi seemed to like it. They shrugged their shoulders and laughed ‘hahaha’.

“Good, good. But I’m really talented and impressive! If it’s for 3 years, then you’re... an F-Rank, but since you’re Haeyeon Guild Leader’s hyung, I’ll specially discount it and make it into 20 years as a subordinate!”

It seemed like they knew about me too. Still, it seemed like they didn’t thoroughly understand all. Then again, no matter how impressive the Dokkaebi was, they only had one

body. There was no reason to study a simple F-Rank's every move.

Still, after getting involved like this, it might be better to be a little more cautious in the future.

"You have a contract, right?"

At my words, the Dokkaebi stopped laughing. They looked straight at me.

"A contract? Using even a contract?"

As expected, they thought it was childishly playing at being a subordinate. But, it couldn't be like that. I had to do it right.

"Of course we have to properly use a contract. Why, are you scared?"

"No! But I don't understand. It's too suspicious? And too self-confident."

The Dokkaebi's body floated up to midair. They slid towards me, and then looked me over closely while circling around me.

"Resistance skills are passive so you wouldn't have one; are you going to use an item?"

“I’m not. If you’re doubtful, you can add a clause against items in the contract.”

“Then a skill that increases mental strength?”

“I’m not using that either. Anyways my skills are 5% increase at most. It probably wouldn’t make a difference? I’ll add skills to the contract too. Not using mine, of course, and other people’s active skills – that should be okay, right?”

I said that, but the Dokkaebi still didn’t ease their suspicions. They were very sensitive.

“Umm, it’s weird, it’s suspicious. It feels like you’re hiding something! Even though you’d definitely lose? Even though just a while ago you were really scared? Even though even your legs gave out?”

Of course I was hiding something. It seemed like I had to make that guy relax first. If this continued, their attitude was that they wouldn’t easily sign the contract.

“Truthfully speaking... I do have an ulterior motive.”

I pretended to be bashful and continued speaking.

“Since it’s a bet that won’t harm me even if I lose.”

“Won’t harm you?”

“That’s right. I’m an ordinary F-Rank Hunter, and you’re that famous Dokkaebi. If I win, it’d be amazing, but even if I lose, I would get the title of the Dokkaebi’s subordinate, right?”

This time I put on an embarrassed expression. Without trying to act, as soon as I thought of confessing to Kim Sunghan 30 times, my nape quickly became red. It was so embarrassing, shit.

“You’re... like you say, impressive, and... I’m um, a fan... or not to that point, but. Wh-what I mean is, if I become your subordinate, it’d be an honor... or something like that. Anyways, I don’t think you’re someone who would treat me badly. And...”

“And?”

The Dokkaebi asked in an excited voice. It was obvious that their face would show a smirk if they weren’t wearing a mask.

“...It was cool. When you announced ‘I have all sorts of secrets bundled away’. It was really cool.”

“Well I’m pretty impressive and cool!”

The Dokkaebi snickered and shot up in the air. They might hit their head on the ceiling like that.

“I like you! If you had just said you wanted to be my subordinate, I would’ve laughed it off, but to think that you would provoke me and make a bet. How fun! I also like that you’re even thinking of making a contract!”

“I said I would be fine with losing, but I have confidence I’ll win, though?”

“Right, right, okay!”

The Dokkaebi held a piece of parchment in their hands.

“Let’s bet!”

The reeling was a success.

With the cheerful laughter, I shifted Suk Hayan in my arms. Now I just had to reap the benefits, so I had to do something about this young lady.

“Before that, can you take this person to the infirmary?”

At my words, the Dokkaebi readily nodded their head, and taking Suk Hayan, disappeared and shortly reappeared.

As expected, a teleportation skill was really great. I wanted it too.

“Okay, let’s fill out the contract!”

The Dokkaebi lowered the parchment they were holding on top of desk. It was an Association-guaranteed A-Rank-use stat decreasing contract.

‘Thinking of, how were the Dokkaebi’s stats again? Should I check their name too?’

If I saw their name, I might be able to know their gender too. As soon as I used the Seed-Leaf skill, the veiled Status Window of the Dokkaebi appeared.

[Awakened Person – Yoon Yoon[11]

Current stat rank B

Possible Awakening stat rank B

Optimized Initial Skills

Guess Who?(S) Acquired

Cloud Steps(B) Acquired]

...What kind of name was that? Like a dokkaebi, it was strange. And you couldn't tell if they were a woman or a man.

Their stats were on the higher side with B, and surprisingly, there wasn't a single one related to teleportation among the optimized initial skills. Guess Who? was probably the hiding skill and Cloud Steps was a relatively common flight skill.

"You're not going to fill it out? Did you maybe change your mind in the meantime?"

While I was looking at the Status Window, I was looking blank for a moment, so the Dokkaebi urged me. Their character was hasty.

I took out a pen and wrote down the conditions on the empty places on the contract.

“It’s vague with once, so do it three times~.”

Looking over the contents I was writing, the Dokkaebi interrupted. Wasn’t it for their own amusement that they increased the number of times, not because it was vague?

“If you get scared just once, I’ll raise to you subordinate number 1!”

“You have other subordinates?”

“Three counting you!”

Then again, they needed right-hand men so that if some unfortunate incident occurred to the Dokkaebi, their people could release the bundle of secrets or whatever in their stead.

I wrote down the game result conditions and the skill, item unallowed, etc. while occasionally getting interruptions. With the Dokkaebi carefully going over it, we might run out of space.

Unlike the impulsive attitude, they were surprisingly meticulous.

“The part where it says that the loser[12] won’t listen to irrational commands, absolutely needs to be detailed. And it probably won’t happen, but if I happen to lose, write down that you won’t ask about other people’s secret information!”

“I definitely won’t ask about that. I don’t intend to do something dangerous to you.”

They were a valuable person so I had to treasure them.

After ending with choosing the bet period to be one week, we finished by signing.

“It’d be a nuisance for others, so if possible, don’t bring in other people. And it’d be great if you kept a minimal amount of my privacy. For example, not in someplace like a bathroom or a restroom.”

“Don’t worry! I’ve never! Secretly gone in a restroom or bathhouse! Or thought of doing something like that!”

At the confident Dokkaebi’s words, I was certain.

They must be a woman.

There was no way a man with a hiding skill wouldn’t peek at a women’s bath even just once. At minimum, they would’ve thought about it.

“Then, take care of me from now on.”

After carefully putting away the contract, I gave a warm smile to my future subordinate.

[1] lit. 'she acted similar to SSM as if/in case someone would say they aren't uncle and niece' where the 2nd half of the sentence is a commonly used metaphor, but it doesn't tl as well in eng. I mean, I could tl literally and it'd be understandable, but it wouldn't really sound natural, like it should be.

[2] lit. 'run with body' to mean 'use one's body to do things or work' and lit. 'lick outside of watermelon' to mean 'know things superficially/shallowly'

[3] 'ahgassi' but I doubt it'll show up often, like ahjussi does, so I'm just using 'young lady'

[4] lit. 'my heart suddenly collapsed' which means he was surprised/startled, but i don't think it means the same thing in eng?

[5] i think it's also used metaphorically to mean 'frightened' but it's prob just means the color here? (does not 'frightening' hence why this is just in a footnote)

[6] bc of the lack of pronouns I'm not really clear on who the subjects are in this & the following sentence. From the context of the later convo w the dokkaebi, I assumed it at least included YJ, but it also might have been 'we' or 'she'

[7] same word as the stat I've been calling 'Mental' so he might be talking about the stat too idk

[8] a men's outer robe worn in the olden days

[9] idk what he wants actually bc lit. all it says is '[I] want/desire/covet' where even the 'I' is implied. Probably the skills + freedom

[10] lit. 'slowly pull on the fishing rod'

[11] there are no spaces in names in krn so idk if this is a surname + first name, or just one name

[12] the subject wasn't specified but I can't just leave out the subject in eng so I made do

Chapter 31: < Found it! (1) >

< Found it! (1) >

After parting from the Dokkaebi, I went to the infirmary where Suk Hayan was. I dropped by the 1st floor's convenience store on the way and bought coffee that supposedly had very little sugar. Should I say it's a patient-visitation present, or bribe?

Since she was going to become an unlimited treasure chest pouring out gold, I should treat her well.

“Is Suk Hayan-ssi here?”

At my question, the infirmary doctor pointed to a room on one side. After writing in the guestbook, I went into the room and saw Suk Hayan lying down on a bed. So she hadn't woken up yet. I pulled a chair over and sat down near the window.

The weather was nice today too. A bit later, it would become seriously hot. This year, I didn't have to worry about the electric bill and could leave the air conditioner on. The company-paid electric bill was the best.

‘Since it's the summer 5 years ago.’

Even though I had many things to do here and there, it hadn't been even one week since I returned to the past. Somehow, I was really busy. It was all because that guy Yoohyun suddenly tried to confine me... or actually, it was my title's fault.

‘As soon as training is done, I really will live carefree.’

I had regressed, thinking that I would quietly live, receiving help from my amazing dongsaeng, so how did it become like this?

But a big fish was hanging right in front of my nose, so I couldn't just not cast a fishing rod. And the means were good so if you said the probability of catching was about 90%, how could I just watch?

Seeing is wanting. It was impossible before throwing away worldly desires and achieving spiritual enlightenment.

Still, you had to be reasonably greedy.

'Let's see, they said that we'll have a practical exercise in the guild tomorrow. Will they use real monsters there?'

The targets of Association training practical exercises were people who dressed up as monsters. Of course, they also didn't give out real weapons. But, if it was someplace like Haeyeon, they would probably have real monsters and real weapons, and,

Even go to a dungeon.

'It would be my first dungeon attack after the regression.'

Of course, it would be an F- or E-like low-ranking dungeon and there would be powerful guards, so I wouldn't need to do much. Maybe A-Rank Hunter Kim Jiyeon, who was

nominated to be Yerim's sunbae, would follow us.

'I'll finally be able to use my skill on Yerim and Myeongwoo.'

I had to use it before we went into a dungeon, to be most effective, so I had put it off until now. The problem was that the skill duration time was 3 days.

For Yerim, she would keep on going into dungeons with the guild's support, so it didn't matter, but what should I do about Myeongwoo? Blowing off two days seemed like a waste, and going once into a low-ranking dungeon didn't seem like enough experience to learn a skill.

'I want to make him go into another dungeon before the 3 days pass... Do I have to personally find one? If I ask Kim Sunghan to handle the attack, wouldn't he help?'

Since it's your grandfather's wish, listen to it just once.

While I was thinking this and that, Suk Hayan woke up.

"Are you alright?"

“.....Han Yoojin-ssi?”

Suk Hayan raised her upper body up and sat, looking at me with squinting eyes. Why were her eyes... ah.

“Here are your glasses.”

After taking and putting on her glasses, she gave a small smile.

“Thank you. It seems like you were caught up in the Dokkaebi’s prank because of me.”

“No, it was the Dokkaebi’s fault.”

“I even prepared Oochunghwangsimhwan[1], but I didn’t know they would appear so fast. And they were scarier than I had thought.”

Suk Hayan slightly shook her shoulders. Well, it was enough to shock someone. I gave the coffee to her. The eyes behind the glasses lenses bent into slits and she smiled.

“The Dokkaebi went back.”

Probably. They might actually be around here somewhere.

At my words, Suk Hayan was surprised.

“Already?”

“Dokkaebi, your fashion sense sucks. Blue clothes with a red mask, is it a five-year-old’s coloring book?”

“...E-excuse me?”

“Since it’s quiet, they must have gone.”

If they were here, there was no way they wouldn’t have burst in with something with that personality. At the very least, they would have ripped a bald spot on my head or something.

“What I said just now is absolutely a secret from the Dokkaebi.”

As soon as I earnestly spoke, Suk Hayan snorted and laughed.

"I'm regretful. There were a lot of things I wanted to ask. Hunters try not to expose their skills, especially special skills. A case like the Dokkaebi is rare."

That was true. Even speaking of me, I was hiding mine.

"Instead, can I give a different offer?"

"An offer?"

She had an expression full of anticipation.

"Are you going to enter my lab? Or a collaboration?"

"I guess it would be close to a collaboration. But it's not a collaboration between labs. What I'm going to provide is, none other than information."

"By information, do you mean dungeons?"

"Yes."

Suk Hayan had a gleam in her eyes as if she had expected it.

“As expected, you have a special route to get information. You know too much for it to just be the results of personal investigation.”

“I guess you can say that I have one.”

To be specific, it was expected for that to appear.

“Like we spoke of in the classroom, the most lacking thing right now is data about dungeons. I will provide that for Suk Hayan-ssi.”

“Good, then a collaboration. I was wondering if I had to go abroad.”

“Let’s do 5:5 for the stakes in the outputs. Do you perhaps need something like an investment as well?”

Even though right now I was poor.

“No, I don’t need it yet. More than anything, collecting data would probably cost the most money. Thinking of what to research first, my heart is already beating fast.”

She said extremely excitedly. What do you mean ‘what first’.

“How about researching the laws of dungeon formation first?”

“The laws of dungeon formation?”

“Yes. It’s a field I’ve also investigated a little in. It seems like there are a type of rules for dungeon formation. It’s possible to be able to partially figure out even a dungeon’s internal information according to mainly formation time, surrounding environment, location, etc.”

At my words, Suk Hayan’s expression became even more earnest than before.

“If that’s true, through reverse engineering, it might be possible to predict when and where a dungeon will appear.”

“Yes? Um, probably?”

Even 5 years later, formation location and time couldn’t be predicted.

Wait, was it really that they couldn’t be? Maybe they weren’t. At Suk Hayan’s words, I became suspicious.

The time when Dungeon Persons[2] in the U.S. that Suk Hayan became affiliated to was able

to rake in immense profit in royalties through discovering the laws of dungeon formation, was 3 years later.

After that, the accuracy of the laws increased, but they couldn't give new research results.

Just looking at that, it might have been that they couldn't.

'4 years from now, the White House and leading facilities moved.'

The time when, as the number of dungeons increased and ranks rose, the saturation speed also became faster and the amount of damage started to get bigger, it was at that period. Of course, since it was when something like that was happening, moving to a safer place wasn't strange.

But if my memory was right, even up to 5 years later, the leading facilities in the U.S. hadn't once suffered a dungeon break.

'Instead of couldn't, or didn't... did they hide it?'

No way. Despite everything, they wouldn't have.

But, if they really did hide it. So that they could announce that they could know a dungeon's formation ahead of time, after various countries' governments, especially those of the main rival countries of the U.S., were driven into a corner.

They would have gotten a much greater profit, than if they had announced it during a peaceful period.

'...I don't think they would do something crazy like that. It's something like profiting off war or acting like they can't see the damage from dungeons.'

Even one year, no half a year, later was to the extent of being able to seize China. Russia also wasn't in a good situation.

They would have gone wild playing the role of world police that they had lost for a while, by saying they would protect you from dungeons.

"Suk Hayan-ssi."

"Yes?"

"I'll do my utmost to help you, so please successfully research in Korea."

“If I can, I would be happy too.”

Would it be okay with this young lady by herself? Should I catch some researchers to bring over from somewhere? Who were the famous people in dungeons studies again? They had to be ones with a strong sense of justice or morals, too. Or a type who would be satisfied with just being able to research.

“Then, I will contact you again next week. Let’s speak about more details then. Can you tell me your contact information?”

“Ah, yes. Please tell me yours as well.”

After exchanging contact information with her, I went outside.

My head was a little full because unexpected guess was added, but it was something that hadn’t happened yet. I just had to change it.

And I was mostly done preparing for Suk Hayan with just the Dokkaebi, so there wasn’t much more I needed to do.

‘Should I put the greed for royalties on hold?’

I didn’t really need that money; let’s do something nice for people. Because the cheap

American bastards would get their feelings a little hurt, I'll just release it.

...No, let's get royalties from just the developed nations kicking up a fuss. Especially getting some from Japan would be okay. It wouldn't hurt my conscience to get twice as much.

Second day of novice Hunter training.

After an additional theory class under someone other than Suk Hayan, practice was held with real monsters, as expected.

They were Tooth Moles caught from an F-Rank dungeon, and Yerim dealt with them quickly and Yoo Myeongwoo trembled, about to cry, and only drove in a knife in one hour.

And I was pretending a little to be weak, when Yerim broke the partition and intruded, freezing the Tooth Moles. The problem was that they were frozen so solid that it was harder to kill them. Sawing at an ice chunk with a knife was really hard.

Then the third day.

While the Dokkaebi hadn't come looking for me yet, finally we were able to go into a dungeon. We went to the maintenance room early in the morning.

"Rented equipment must absolutely be returned after the dungeon attack, and in the case of

loss or damage, you must compensate for them. But Hunter Bak Yerim has no obligation to compensate.”

The person in charge of the maintenance room said. At ‘compensate’, Yoo Myeongwoo, who was feeling the weapons that were displayed, snatched his hand away. Really, that timid character of his needed to be fixed a little. Then again, once he got the SS-Rank skill, he would probably get self-confident soon. Like when strength automatically fills your shoulders when you drive[3] a sports car.

‘Should I slowly use the My Brat skill?’

Towards Yerim, who was swinging around a battle-axe at a display stand that was said to be prepared specially for the S-Rank-nim, I used the single skill growth focus. Then, soon, the Message Window popped... popped... why wasn’t it appearing?

‘.....Did something like a system error occur?’

What was it? I was wondering if I should try again when finally the window popped up.

[My Brat is the Best(L) Applied to single skill growth focus target Bak Yerim!]

Unacquired Optimized Skills

Pale Rain(S)

Frozen Earth(S)

Cold Resistance(A)

Mana Up(B)

Other Recommended Skills

Ice Attribute Reinforcement(A)

Flame Resistance(A)

Mana Up(A)

Agility Up(A)

Good Effect Coldpack(B)

The rest has been omitted

Excluding those, choosing a random[4] water pump skill is possible]

...Excuse me, person who made the system? There's a typo here. Instead of 'water pump' isn't it 'random'?[5] And it overlaps with 'random'[6].

'This wouldn't be writing down the skill explanation windows in real time, right?'

If it was, then I would understand the explanations being lacking, but no way. Still, with the long time for it to pop up and even having a typo, I felt odd. Was it a real god? Or something else?

Though, even if I knew, nothing would change. Even before this, and for 5 years after this, many people studied and researched diligently about what the system was, but what was revealed was insignificant. It was a terrible existence that completely turned the world on its head, so it wasn't strange to say that you couldn't find a single hair with humans' ability.

Still, seeing how there was a typo, it didn't seem completely omnipotent. I wanted to tell the cultists who argued that dungeon and Awakened People were given by their god.

'Let's finally use the skill.'

First of all, there were four optimized skills. I didn't know what the difference was from the initial optimized skills, but there were two S-Ranks so I didn't need to hesitate for long.

Pale Rain. This would probably be better. I had a hunch that Frozen Earth would be better to get after achieving Cold Resistance. Since I couldn't see the explanations, I should go safely first.

When I chose Pale Rain, a Message Window appeared again.

[Target Bak Yerim's Pale Rain(S) Achievement Conditions

Attain Level 10(Progress 1/10)]

It seemed like when the condition was fulfilled, achievement was possible. The condition was really easy.

Usually, you earned one skill with every 10 levels, so it was the same as having a basic condition.

Then, I used the skill on Myeongwoo. All sorts of miscellaneous skills came up but since there was only one SS, I didn't have to think about it.

When I directly chose the Gold Forge's Owner skill, the Message Window with the condition

popped up shortly.

[Target Yoo Myeongwoo's Gold Forge's Owner(SS) Achievement Conditions

Attain Level 10(Progress 1/10)

Sharpening the blade of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 17/10,000)]

.....There's a light at the end of labor. Our Myeongwoo, good luck[7].

[1] 'hwan' is a syllable often at the end of medicine names (to mean 'medicine, pill'). This is a made-up word, so going off that, it's probably a drug name. It's not that important so I'm not going to bother trying to guess what it means.

[2] this is likely a proper noun in eng transliterated into krn but I can't tell if it's a 'persons' or, like, someone's name since ppl use people names for companies all the time. So it could be 'persens', 'persons', 'persuns', or even 'persenj' idk

[3] lit. 'grab the steering wheel of' so he might mean that literally

[4] eng word transliterated into krn

[5] 'water pump' is 무자위 (moo-ja-wi) and 'random' is 무작위 (moo-jak-wi)

[6] the eng word, as noted in footnote [4]

[7] lit. the eng word 'fighting' transliterated, but it's konglish slang used as a phrase to cheer someone on. Something like 'good luck', 'do your best', 'I'm rooting for you', 'you can do it', etc.

Chapter 32: < Found It! (2) >

< Found It! (2) >

'Still, he already did seventeen.'

He must have sharpened scissors or pocket knives or kitchen knives or something like that. Why didn't you sharpen more diligently?

'If he had put his talent to use and had worked as a smith or a similar technician, that guy also would have only had to fulfill the basic condition.'

Since it was an optimized initial skill, he could have somehow gotten the skill while Awakening. Even if you said that the conditions were eased through the My Brat skill, if he had put his talent to use before, would he have only sharpened ten thousand knives?

If he had been born before industrialization, it would have been easier for him to go on that path, but he was born into the wrong time period and environment. It was because my skill existed that there was still hope for him to find his talent, but if it wasn't for that, it would have just been buried.

'...I decided not to use the keyword on people, but looking at this, I'm unsure again.'

If I saw a special skill that isn't combat- or healer-related and would obviously be buried, should I just help? If their stat ranks were low like Myeongwoo, then there wouldn't be a lot of things going wrong later. If they were stat C or higher, they would live well even if I left them alone, so I could just pretend not to see them.

At any rate, they would be very rare cases and it would only be a couple of people, so if they stood out, let's reel them in.

"Ahjussi, how's this?"

Yerim held up and showed a saw about the same size as her height, as she asked. Not to mention the axe, but what was with the saw? Why would you show those kinds of things to a kid?

"Doesn't it look like it'll cut through ice well?"

"Just freeze a little, and mainly use the shadow eating. At any rate, if you go to a high rank

dungeon, even if you used Sigh to its utmost, you'd probably only catch a few."

"Then, as expected, would the axe be better? This seems like it raises your Strength stat pretty well."

"Supplement your Strength with wearable equipment, and for your weapon, you should use one that matches your skills and physique. You heard during the theory class."

Yerim put on an expression saying 'was that so?'. Did she doze off during the training?

"Anyways when you get an attack skill, your weapon will just be there to help, so get something that fits well in your hand."

As a combat magician, it was good to prioritize the Mana stat for even the main weapon. Though you had to keep something for melee attack in reserve. After scolding Yerim, I went toward Yoo Myeongwoo, who was still hesitating.

"Take the spear over there and defeat things with mostly defense. You just have to avoid the pressure points like you learned yesterday."

"O-okay."

"High ranking equipment wouldn't get damaged by low rank monsters, so don't worry and

pick a good one. All you have to do is not lose it.”

At my words, Myeongwoo relaxed.

But why did I have to choose the equipment for the kids? Where did the training instructor[1] go? Why didn't they come? That was negligence of duty.

‘Not even someone else, but the S-Rank novice training instructor is going around being tardy. They must be inattentive[2].’

Was it a young person with no social experience? It was obvious it was incomplete. This was why people had to go to the army. Wasn't it like this because they exempted people who were even E-Rank? S-Ranks should impartially go to the army too. Duty for national defense was good.

Even while complaining, I took care of getting the equipment and items. As expected of a large guild, there were a lot of good things.

“Do we have to pay for the expendables too?”

“If you are not a guild-affiliated Hunter, then you have to pay.”

“Yerim~ Take this and that, this, and that red bottle and give it to us.”

“Yes, ahjussi!”

The maintenance manager frowned a little. What, huh, what? All I said was that the S-Rank-nim would hand out things remaining after she used them a little.

Just then, the maintenance room door opened. The tardy training instructor-nim must have finally arrived. Just who was it, at least their face[3]...

“...Yoohyun?”

Why did you come here? I did hear that he was going to the new A-Rank dungeon attack, but it wasn't today? Did he accidentally come here?

“Sorry, I was a little late, right?”

Yoohyun said with a refreshing face.

...Don't tell me that the no-social-experience, tardy-because-he-didn't-go-to-the-army, young, inattentive training instructor was you? My guess was exactly right at least. As if I was a prophet.

Or, no. I mean, why was he here?

"I think it doesn't make sense, but maaaybe if you're here as the dungeon attack practice training instructor, I'd like to advise you to look for a little more reliable and proper way to waste your time."

Unless he was crazy, there was no reason to take F-Ranks into a mid-, high-rank dungeon; was this a comedy where an S-Rank on his 3rd year says he would attack a low rank dungeon?

Exterminating ants with a flame thrower, what, was it something like that?

At my words, that guy Yoohyun put on a sad face.

"It's been a while since we saw each other but you're not happy to see me?"

What, suddenly. And it hadn't even been a week.

"You were the one who was busy, not me"

"After taking the Horned Lion, you haven't come home once. After talking like you were

going to come by a lot, when you were leaving.”

That dongsaeng was acting like a wife telling off a husband who stayed out overnight. It was all because of the skill, so I had to endure it.

“Okay. I’ll come over often.”

“And call sometimes too. Does it make sense that I have to hear about my own hyung from other people’s reports? Tell me beforehand.”

“You can just call me.”

Do you not have hands or feet? At my words, Yoohyun gave a short sigh.

“You got mad, telling me not to call. You even blocked me.”

Huh? Did I? It was something from 5 years ago, so I couldn’t remember. After taking out my cell phone and checking, there was some kind of mark next to Yoohyun’s contact information. Was this the block sign? It was different from the phone I was using before the regression. No wonder there was completely no contact from the guy who tried to confine me.

“I took off the block.”

“Thanks.”

Only then did that dongsaeng’s whining stop. He wasn’t even a kid. Though twenty was still young.

“So you’re really the practice instructor?”

“Why, I can’t be?”

Well, it wasn’t that he couldn’t be.

“You seem free.”

“It’s not like that, but it’s quite a nice story for the new S-Rank’s first dungeon attack’s assistance to be done by the S-Rank who is her affiliated guild leader. And it’s the time when the interest in Hunter Bak Yerim is at its height. You can’t say that Korea’s S-Ranks get along well with each other, so we should show this new sight while we’re at it.”

Saying so, Yoohyun looked towards Bak Yerim. Yerim also looked straight back at that guy. You definitely couldn’t say that the exchanged glances were nice.

New sight, yeah right. Were they going to package that up as ‘we get along well~’?

“Who else is going besides you?”

“No one.”

“Huh why? You’re not going to take care of and teach the kids too.”

“Department Head Suk said that it would be enough with just hyung?”

...That ahjussi just worked people hard without even giving them pay. First of all, I was also a novice Hunter, so what did he expect saying it would be enough? Did Suk Hayan tattle that I knew a lot?[4] I should’ve pretended less that I knew things.

“Still wouldn’t it be unea...sy, or not I guess.”

Low rank dungeons attacks were originally things that were finished in an average of two days if you prepared a team properly. The shortest attack record for an F-Rank was as little as 23 minutes. It would differ according to size, but if that guy Yoohyun came along, would it take half a day if it was long? It would probably just be like going on an excursion.

“The dungeon we’re attacking is a D-Rank low-grade rock terrain. They said there are only short-range attack monsters so there shouldn’t be any danger, and we only need to be

careful of falling rocks.”

“So there shouldn’t be any emergencies.”

If it was a D-Rank, it was at a level where a level 1 stat F would die right away as soon as they set foot inside. If there were long-distance attack monsters, then it would be uneasy even if we got protection, but since there weren’t, it would probably be fine.

Before the regression, I went into an F-Rank for my first dungeon, and nearly died, but this time, I was starting with a safe D-Rank. As expected, personal connections were the best.

Before going to the dungeon, the journalists were called over in advance and they took interviews. Of course, Myeongwoo and I were kicked off to the side[5], and Yerim and that guy Yoohyun acted out ‘we’re really close’.

If you didn’t know, they looked like they had a really nice sunbae-hoobae[6] relationship. Despicable guys. ...Though I wasn’t in a position to say so.

The dungeon we were attacking was near Yeouido.

The entrance of a dungeon that wasn’t saturated was usually a size that would fit one or two people. Since they were that small, even now when they were managed well, sometimes an

undiscovered dungeon would burst open.

Once a dungeon entrance was discovered, a defense facility was placed a minimum of 300 meters length- and width-wise centered from the entrance. Then administrators from the Hunter Association observed the situation 24 hours.

If a dungeon entrance appeared inside a building, unfortunately, existing buildings had to be pushed away, but the compensation was a satisfying amount. Because the compensation was paid by the dungeon profits, if it was reasonable, more than the building's or land's average sale price was offered. Of course, it wasn't that there weren't any tear-inducing situations where the land was extremely pricey and an F-Rank dungeon, which was rock bottom in terms of profit, interfered with the building's redevelopment[7].

'I feel like I've come back to work after a long vacation,'

Looking at the bluish gate that was stabilized because attacks were done regularly, I mumbled. No, it wasn't that long. And I was busy because of other things. I couldn't rest much.

I needed more vacation. No, I wanted to throw down a letter of resignation. I had to go around doing dungeon attacks again after even regressing?

Why would I repeat something agonizing that I had done to the point of being sick of it, when even nice things were enough after once or twice? It wasn't like I was a high-ranking Hunter heaped with money and honors, and like dungeons would burst open one by one

just because I alone was left out.

I definitely should relax around. My dream since I was young was to be a rich bum.

“The dungeon gate will be maintained for one hour after activation.”

Yoohyun placed himself in front of the fledglings[8] and explained like an experienced Hunter.

“Once one hour has passed, either we finish the attack, or an inactive state persists as long as the Hunters inside haven’t annihilated everything. It means that we will stop being able to go in and out. Of course, it doesn’t mean that there isn’t a method for an emergency escape, but items for escape are very rare.”

Then he pulled out and showed a gate stone. It was rare even 5 years later, and right now, it was something hard to even glimpse, but he had one.

“Currently, there are only twenty two in the country, and they are single-use. So, you must never challenge a dungeon that is over your ability. Even if you discover a dungeon reaching a saturated state, please do not think of saving time with your life if possible.”

Yoohyun said, looking straight at me. What, punk. I didn’t have any intention of doing something crazy like that.

If you rushed into a saturated dungeon, you could postpone a break until the Hunter who entered, died. But I was an F-Rank so maybe I would hold out for about one minute. It wouldn't make a difference whether I ran in or not, so I would just notify the Association and run away; would I be crazy and go in?

After going on about various precautions outside, Yoohyun went inside the gate first. You couldn't know the situation inside the gate from outside, so usually the strongest or the person with the highest defense ability entered at the lead.

Of course, entering individually was absolutely forbidden, and it was standard to form a group and consecutively go in, but right now it was a practice. The novices could wait for the the training instructor to secure safety and then follow in.

"Let's start to go in now."

Since about 5 minutes had passed, it had probably been arranged enough.

At my words, Yerim fearlessly stepped into the gate quickly. Then, I pushed in the hesitating Myeongwoo and went inside.

As soon as I went through the gate, the very first thing I felt was an acrid smell piercing my nose.

Then I saw a wide-open sky and a rock cliff, and the wreckage of the burnt remains of monsters.

I thought it would be loathesome place, but my heart was beating fast.

It was a different world that you could reach even with just one step forward. Unfamiliar air, unfamiliar scenery, that sense of alienation from nobody being able to come in once the door shuts.

It could be an escape, or it could be a liberation.

Whichever it was, to me, who was being pressed in by all sorts of things, that moment through the door was a sweet instant.

‘Of course, after that it was all bloody.’

The sentimentality was just to here.

Now, I didn't have debt, and wasn't called trash, and my relationship with my dongsaeng was good. Hooray regression. The person who made the system that passed down the wish stone, thank you. Who cared if you made some typos. But, please be more detailed about the skill explanations. Please.

“The surroundings nearby are safe.”

Han Yoohyun, who wasn't even holding a weapon, said. Then again, it was a low-grade D-Rank dungeon, so even if he briefly used just his skills, everything would be wiped out. But it wasn't so for me and Yoo Myeongwoo.

“Let's get up to, not a lot, but just level 10.”[9]

Let's try riding the S-Rank bus. When I pulled out a spear from my inventory, Myeongwoo, who was looking around, lifted his weapon too. Both of us chose lances. With the equipment options prioritized for defence and strength, the intention was completely for profiting off things thrown our way.

“Me too, I can help too!”

Yerim said, swinging around a rapier. No, you should raise your level.

“What helping. Even if you hunted backbreakingly[10], you can't get 10 levels. You heard already that following stat rank, the difference in experience amount for levels is a lot.”

“Was that so?”

“You really did doze off during the class, huh.”

“...I didn't sleep but just thought about other things a little bit.”

Well, she was at the age when not wanting to study was at its peak. Of course, no one wanted to study even after hitting thirty.

“The difference between the amount of experience needed for each level for a stat rank F and for S, is about five times. In return, the amount of stat growth for each level is much higher for S-Ranks. Judging by efficiency, F-Ranks are pitiful to the point of tears.”

So, Yerim needed to do well here to go up about 5 levels. There was a little bit of a difference between dungeons, but if it was a low-grade D-Rank, you had to monopolize it to get about 7 levels.

As you went up in level, the requirement for amount of experience also increased, so she probably had to clear two more D-Ranks to get 10 levels.

“Let's move out.”

Yoohyun said, walking along the road between cliffs. Wait, weren't those things between the piled up ashes, magic stones?

“You’re not packing up the magic stones?”

“Ah... I’ve never picked them up myself so I forgot.”

Yes, it would be like that. To that amazing dongsaeng of mine, D-Rank magic stones would be about the cost of chewing gum, but it wasn’t for me. At any rate, I was wondering how I would find ten thousand knives, but I should pick those up and sell them to buy some.

“Yerim, can you adjust Sigh’s chilliness to a minimum, air volume to a maximum, and blow away just those piled up ashes?”

“I’ll try.”

Soon, an extremely cold wind blew. Like its name, it was in the form of a fog spreading from a sigh, so it wasn’t a strong wind, but since it was focused on air volume, it was enough to blow away the ashes. Three D-Rank magic stones. I will use them well.

“I can take these, right?”

“Of course.”

I love you, dongsaeng-nim.

“So I can use Sigh like this too.”

“It probably wouldn’t be very useful, though? Still, it would be good to raise practical ability. You’re going to keep going into dungeons, so try using your skills in the most diverse, uncommon ways possible. There are a lot of cases when helpful uses were discovered while messing around.”

“Yes!”

Speaking of, was that guy Yoohyun using all his skills well? When I used Seed-Leaf before we went into the dungeon, I saw that he had gotten all of his optimized skills so there wasn’t anything I needed to do.

Since he had 3 years of work experience, I thought it would be so, but I was little regretful. Once the cool down time was over, should I look around at the random skills? It just might happen that a great one would pop up.

[1] again, it means more like ‘person in charge’ but I thought ‘instructor’ fit better in eng

[2] 빠지다: I’m not sure what this word means in this context. when I read the paragraph to my dad, he said it’s probably ‘inattentive’ from ‘바람이 빠지다’, but I think it can also mean that they’re skipping the class

[3] he was probably going to say sth like 'let's at least see their face' but since the verb is last in krn, it was left out, so that's why the sentence looks a little awkward in eng

[4] this sentence has the word (잘알) I was confused about in ch. 26 footnote [6]. I found a couple more examples, and I think it's slang used both as a noun and a verb, but most likely used as a noun (+ 'to be', which was why I had thought it was verb) in both instances in this novel. It's probably 잘 (well, good) + 알다 (to know), used to mean an expert/sb who knows sth well, as much as I can infer.

[5] lit. 'were in a condition of being borrowed barley sacks', where, for 'borrowed barley sacks', the krn-eng dict gave a weird tl for, but the krn dict told me are ppl who sit quietly to the side while other people around them are talking and laughing

[6] hoobae is the opp. of sunbae, so sth like 'underclassman' or sb from work/the same field who is less experienced

[7] the 'interfered... redevelopment' part is from the lit. 'do 알박기', where the krn dict tells me 알박기 means 'an action where you buy a little of an important part of an area scheduled for redevelopment and outrageously inflate the price to interfere with the development and extort a lot of money from the developer'. I don't know anything about real estate so I don't know if there's a term for that in eng

[8] lit. 'newly hatched chick' but it's used metaphorically like 'newbie'/'rookie'/'novice', the way 'fledgling' is in eng & they're both bird metaphors

[9] lit. 'I'll request up to...' kind of like that standard 'take care of me' phrase but in this case it's more like 'I'll ask you to help me get up to...' or 'I'll ask you to get up to...'

[10] lit. 'so that [your] bones fall out'

Chapter 33: < Found It! (3) >

< Found It! (3) >

Low-grade D-Rank rock terrain dungeon.

The monsters that tended to appear here were mountain goats that moved along the cliffs. They were called Rock Goats, and their optimized initial skills were Jump Head-Butt and Trample.

The Seed-Leaf skill really was great. Though the rank was the lowest of my title skills, the frequency of use was the highest.

Of course there were skills that let you see another person's information. But, you could only check those that were one level lower than your own stats, the skill's rank. Compared to that, Seed-Leaf was a skill that let you check those at any stat or skill rank.

The primary purpose wasn't to check Status Windows, and there were limits, but it

depended on how you used it.

“Ahjussi, here!”

Yerim yelled proudly, pushing forward a goat frozen solid. No, I told you to go level up. Why were you bringing it over?

“I froze it well so you just have to cut it. It’s safe!”

“Saying he just has to cut it, do you think a spear would go through that chunk of ice?”

Yoo Hyun cut in, holding onto the horn of a goat burnt black. Then he smiled at me.

“It’s still breathing. The tough skin is mostly all burnt so the spear blade would probably go in smoothly.”

“I-I can freeze them a little too! Should I take off the skin for you?”

The poor goats. Frozen and roasted, it was chaos from both directions. I looked back at Yoo Myeongwoo whose expression was shrunken in to the point of digging into the ground and disappearing.

“You have to raise your level too. Hurry up and come.”

“M-me too?”

Myeongwoo looked behind me. Then he became like a frightened and withdrawn turtle. It was a half-dead goat, but was he still afraid?

Just in case, I looked back towards Yoohyun and Yerim, and they smiled at the same time. The mood was nice. The goat burnt completely black might seem a little unpleasant but he could just think of it as a whole roast that had its heat adjusted wrongly.

“Rather than me, you should get 10 levels first.”

I wasn't in a hurry but Myeongwoo had to get 10 levels in this dungeon and then shut himself in and sharpen knives. I grabbed the arm of the guy who wasn't trying to move at all and pulled him over. It's not scary, it's okay.

“Think of it as stabbing something like a burnt steak. Or how about a frozen one? Doesn't it look like frostbite?”

“I caught it to give to ahjussi, though.”

Yerim complained. Why were you nitpicking over something like that?

“Yerim.”

At the scolding call, Yerim pouted her lips.

“But.”

“No buts. I’ll tell you while I’m at it, but all three of you have to get along. Or at the very least, don’t fight, and become something like good coworkers.”

From a fire attribute to an ice attribute to even an equipment production. Just how well mixed was it? And if Kim Sunghan also became an S-Rank, they’d be all ready for battle. Later, all kinds of screwed up dungeons would pop up, so if they’d just cooperate and help out, then they’d really be on a roll.

If there was just one thing they were lacking, it was a healer. Even 5 years later, far from a stat-skill SS, there wasn’t even an AS, so it would be hard to find a rank like theirs. Somehow, for healers, stat ranks and skill ranks were inversely proportional. Was it because the average age was in the 50s?

Stat ranks tended to be better the younger and healthier you were. It wasn’t that there weren’t exceptions, but stat S-Ranks were mostly in their mid thirties and lower.

“Especially you, Yoohyun, don’t try to fight with a kid as much as five years younger than you. And you, Yerim, after contracting as an official Hunter, don’t forget that he is the guild leader and 3 years your sunbae.”

At my nagging, those two guys sighed at the same time.

“I wasn’t exactly trying to fight. It’s just because it’s unpleasant when she keeps on being involved with hyung.”

“Ahjussi is my guardian so that’s obvious. Why is that unpleasant?”

“People might say you are still young, but please be aware of your position. Didn’t the public relations team teach you? I’m not keeping my distance from hyung because I like it.”

“I’m paying attention in my own way.”

“If you were paying attention, would you have tried to drag hyung with you when you were going to the Association?”

“S-so we didn’t end up going together. I’m just not used to it yet, I’m working hard on it, okay?”

There they went again. Like fire and ice, the incompatibility was super obvious. Shouldn't the public relations image be the opposite? Something like rivals.

"I told you to stop, both of you."

"...Okay."

"...Yes."

No matter how I looked at it, the problem was bigger on Yoohyun's side, rather than Yerim's. That guy worried too excessively over me. I had to quickly grow Peace and take in one or two more monsters so that guy would also worry less.

"One is my younger brother, and the other is my guardee. But if you keep on fighting, how would I feel? At the very least, pretend to get along in front of me. As much as you do in front of the journalists."

If they kept on pretending, it might become real too.

"If that's what ahjussi wants, then I'll do it. Pretending at least is easy."

Yerim smiled beautifully and looked up at Yoohyun.

“If you’re ahjussi’s younger brother, then you can’t call me a stranger, so let’s get along from now on. I can call you oppa, right?”

...Were you really leaping suddenly to ‘oppa’? That guy Yoohyun also faced her with a warm smile. Both of them had good looks so it was nice to look at. Just the outside was nice.

“Of course. Then I’ll also speak casually from now on.”

“Yes, please do. Please take good care of me from now on, Yoohyun oppa.”

“Take good care of me too, Yerim.”

It was a scene where they were smiling pleasantly but it was obvious that they were sharpening their knives behind their backs. Geez[1], those guys. Just look at them stubbornly not avoiding each other’s gazes and fighting with their eyes.

It was a relief that there were only a few – if I had reeled in several while knowing nothing, I might’ve had to throw a ‘get along well’ campaign.

And our poor Myeongwoo was still hunched over. Then again, since both the S-Ranks were waging a war of nerves between the two of themselves, would an ordinary F-Rank be at ease[2]? Just hang on a bit longer. Joy will come at the end of suffering.

“You won’t have to see those guys for a long time after this so just bear with it for today. You just have to raise 10 levels.”

After that, he would have to take enough time, about half a year, to just sharpen knives, so even if he wanted to see them, he couldn’t. At my pat, Myeongwoo nodded his head. It might even be that it would make that guy more comfortable to do physical labor in a small room instead.

Even after that, the dungeon attack was smooth. Yoohyun didn’t have anything to say and Yerim also fluttered about.

When we got out of the winding valley, a large basin appeared. Hundreds of goats were roaming flocked together in groups on the green field. Beyond that, a huge black goat was standing proudly. Why didn’t you just stick an electric sign that said ‘I am the boss’?

Still, you had to be thankful if they made it obvious like that. If you were caught by a guy who would sometimes hide, it was super annoying.

“Hyung, you said that you’re at 9 levels, right?”

Yoohyun asked. After driving things toward Myeongwoo, I couldn’t get 10 levels yet. Yoo Myeongwoo had gotten 10 levels about 30 minutes ago and was discouraged because he didn’t get a skill.

I was wondering, but as expected, it seemed like the skill he should have gotten originally at 10 levels was replaced by Gold Forge's Owner.

Since the reason why the skill that you get every 10 levels didn't appear was usually because you didn't prepare the conditions. You could get it later once you fulfill the conditions, or you could get nothing... It was about half luck.

"I don't really need to get to 10 levels."

"It'd be comfortable for you if you get at least one more skill. I'll drag some over."

"I will! I will do it!"

Yerim, who was completely used to using Hermes' Sandals now, put herself forward confidently. Then, she leaped into the air in a moment. She was like a fish in water.

'Would a skill not appear this time too?'

Before the regression, I didn't get a new skill until 30 levels. It didn't seem like there would be much of a difference this time around.

I wondered what exactly my optimized skills were.

I wanted to use the Seed-Leaf skill on myself. Just in case, I had tried using it while looking at a mirror, but a Status Window didn't pop up. Not just Seed-Leaf, I wanted to get the growth buff too. Even if I said 'I love me' it probably wouldn't work.

Anyways, to think that of the L-Rank skill titles I barely gained, one was something I had exactly no reason to use, and the other was something that only did good things for others. Person who made the system, do you perhaps dislike me? If not, you should make it easy to use – the weird effect was like that, the keyword was like that, it's really nasty, and cheap-.

[Found it!]

...Excuse me?

A Message Window popped up?! W-wait a minute. Because I insulted them? Did they come find me because I insulted them? I mean, it wasn't like I insulted the system one or two times so why would that happen. What was it? What was it?

Then another Message Window appeared in front of my eyes.

[Ack, I'm sorry!]

No, I'm the one who is sorry for insult... or no. Huh? A system operator chatting mistake?

Fuck, you just wait. Let's just talk. You don't have something like a keyboard window? Why a unilateral conversation-.

"Hyung!"

Yoo Hyun pulled me into his arms as if covering me, as he yelled. At nearly the same time, I shouted.

"Yerim, protect Myeongwoo!"

I didn't know what was going on, but it was a danger signal. In other words, if that guy Myeongwoo was left alone, he would die.

Shortly, we heard shrieks from the herd of goats.

-Kehhhhk!

-Kiehhh!

The smell of burning meat. Maybe Yoohyun's flame resistance had affected me too, because I didn't feel any heat. Were Yerim and Myeongwoo safe? Seeing how the Last Repayment application window didn't pop up, both of them were still alive.

"...Just what's going on?"

Since I was in an embrace, I couldn't see what the situation was. First of all, I knew that we had received a large-scale fire attribute attack. This dungeon, it was a low-grade D-Rank. So why was something using a wide-range attribute attack skill popping up? It wasn't 5 years later when dungeons seesawed like a crazy bitch[3], it should be stable right now?

"It's my first time seeing that kind of monster too."

Yoohyun said in a low voice. Hey, let me see too. When I hit that guy's shoulder, he loosened his arms.

"Be careful."

I turned my body and looked toward the basin. The green grassland was burning red. The corpses of the burnt, burning goats were piled up like a mountain.

The original boss was impaled on a sharp golden beak.

The bird[4] covered up by the fire swung its beak, and tore into and swallowed the well roasted goat. As soon as I saw that characteristic beak, I knew.

‘2nd rank bird-type. Gold Beak Maiya.’

It was a high-grade A-Rank dungeon boss monster. Bird-types were on the weaker side in terms of rank, so it wasn’t at the level of S-Rank. But why was that popping up here?

‘...It couldn’t be that the sorry was for that.’

A real system error? A bug? Tell the system operator to come out. Let’s just talk a little.

“You two, are you okay?”

After checking the monster, I turned my head and found Yerim and Myeongwoo. Thankfully, Yerim wasn’t late and seemed to have used Cold Sigh. With Yerim standing in front of Myeongwoo, I saw a darkened black mark in front of them.

“...We’re okay. But just what is that?”

“Very occasionally, monsters that don’t match the dungeon rank can pop up.”

Though at this period, it was extremely rare. And seeing how an escape gate didn't appear even though the boss monster died, as expected, it seemed like that bird bastard had replaced it as the boss. It became annoying.

Outside, there must be a fuss around now. Since the dungeon that the Haeyeon Guild Leader and novice S-Rank went into changed to at least a B-Rank. One hour had already passed, so they couldn't come help either.

"Hyung, take this."

Yoohyun held out the Gate Stone towards me. Was this a reenactment of before my regression? Of course, compared to the Lauchtas, that damned lizard, the fire chicken was cute.

"I don't need it. That's weaker than you."

Their attribute attacks wouldn't work on each other, and S-Rank combat-aptitude Yoohyun was stronger in terms of physical attacks. It was annoying that it was a flight monster, but Yoohyun had Green[5] Willow Leaves so there wouldn't be a problem.

Myeongwoo and I could just shove ourselves into a corner and be protected by Yerim.

At my words, Yoohyun had a doubtful expression.

“Do you know what kind of monster it is?”

“2nd Rank bird-type Gold Beak Maiya. As you can see, it has a fire attribute and it’s a high-grade A-Rank dungeon boss rank. It has a habit of keeping on chasing its first target, so you don’t have to pull aggro too much. If you just do well, we could probably go out soon? And be careful of the beak attacks. The strength in its feet is relatively weak. Its skull is soft and its back and belly are the hardest. Maybe to protect its head, that region has the highest fire temperature, but it probably won’t affect you at all. It might look like it has one pair of wings but there is one pair of reserve wings hidden away, so instead of separating its wings by attacking them, it’s better to hit its head. As for me and Myeongwoo, Yerim can protect us. Finally, that beak is an extremely expensive material, so if possible, cut it off completely intact.”

Yoohyun had on a face like he couldn’t speak for moment.

“...Hyung, you really do seem to have become a little weird.”

“It’s not that I’m weird, just suspicious. Suk Simyeong said I was suspicious too? Even if you ask, it’s hard to explain, so let’s just let it go. You can’t?”

“It’s not that I can’t...”

“Anyways, I’m your hyung. That much hasn’t changed.”

Whether it was 5-years-earlier Han Yoojin or the current Han Yoojin, the truth that I was Han Yoohyun’s hyung was still the same. Yoohyun gave a small nod and then placed the Gate Stone in my hand.

“Still, hold onto this.”

It was too much of a death flag. Though would it be by a simple bird bastard throwing around fire?

“Please take good care of him.”[6]

Yoohyun said politely to Bak Yerim.

“Don’t worry.”

At this moment, both of them had sincere attitudes as if they had thrown out lingering grudges. I was needlessly feeling satisfied. It would be nice if they would cooperate and get along well.

After looking at me one more time, Yoohyun turned around.

It should be fine. If it was that guy 5 years later, it would be a wrap[7] at 10 minutes, no 5 minutes. Even now, if it was long, wouldn't it take about 30 minutes? So I should set my heart at ease and cheer him on.

[1] ya I haven't heard this one said in earnest since like, idk, high school, but I couldn't think of any other soft/non-swear interjection/exclamation/whatever these are called, and using 'oh dear' was really stretching the limits of my belief.

[2] lit. 'have remaining liver and gall' from the expression 'liver and gall shrivel/fall/become cold/melt' that all mean 'become frightened'

[3] lit. 'crazy [the derogatory word for girl that byr's uncle used for her in ch 19]'. I had previously thought (when tl-ing ch 19) that the derog word for girl isn't that bad, but my dad later told me it's very bad, which means that byr's uncle really was calling his niece a bitch. I went back and fixed it but just fyi.

[4] actually, he uses a word that apparently means 'abnormal and strange looking bird' but that was too long, esp since he uses the word again when he's talking about what type of monster it is. I'm just going to keep on using 'bird' bc there's no general term for mythological birds in eng, only specific ones (i.e. phoenix, roc, etc.)

[5] I changed it to green bc it's easier to use, esp in the next ch. It's kind of a vague word that's either blue or green depending on the context, and judging by the actual def in the krn dict, seems to be sth that more evokes emotions/states of being rather being a set color,

but when describing plants it's green

[6] this is that common polite phrase again, which doesn't have a direct object, so I used 'him' bc a) he's clearly talking abt yj not himself, but b) I didn't think it would be 'them' (yj + mw) bc yh has yet to show a single shred of interest/concern abt anyone other than yj. The phrase is p vague so it includes/is about the situation, but this was the one phrase I could think of, and it requires specifics/a direct object.

[7] lit. 'cut' as the in the eng word transliterated, so it probably means the 'cut' movie directors say, but using 'cut' in this context didn't sound right, so...

Chapter 34: < That's Not How You Use It >

< That's Not How You Use It >

The fire that had covered the entire basin and that very force had died down a lot. The flames that were nibbling away at the few remaining grass blades were being trampled under feet. Sparks shot out as if struggling, but there wasn't a single bit of soot on Yoohyun's shoes.

If your attribute resistance was over B-Rank, it wasn't just your body – the clothes and equipment you were wearing were also affected. Han Yoohyun had grown his A-Rank fire resistance to S-Rank in one year. Even if he dove into a fire pit, not even his shirt collar would burn at all.

-Bbiiii

The Gold Beak Maiya let out a thin noise that didn't suit it. The red eyes with horizontal pupils rolled towards Yoohyun, and it raised its neck frill as it half spread its wings. It was clearly a wary attitude.

-Bbiik bbiik

It consecutively called short calls as if in warning, when,

Puhdeudeuk

It flew up into the sky.

Han Yoohyun stopped and looked up at the bird. A shadow was cast over him, before it quickly went far away. Each time it flapped its wings, fire rain fell from the sky.

Chiiik

The death throes of the flames against the ice fog above our heads like a tent were continuously heard.

"I haven't heard that Guild Leader has a flight skill. Will it be okay?"

Yerim said softly.

"It's okay."

He didn't have a flight skill but he had a substitute skill.

But why wasn't he using it? Was he thinking of making it lower its guard? If flight monsters thought that their opponent couldn't fly, they lowered their guards considerably, and an opportunity could occur. He was being cautious.

-Bbiiiik!

When it flew low about two more times and the opponent didn't move a single inch, the bird leaned back and cried as if excited. It was naive like the birdbrain it was. It would be perfect to use Green Willow Leaves right now, but... he wasn't using it.

'Why isn't he moving at all?'

Being cautious was good, but it was too excessive. Green Willow Leaves also had a

field-of-sight confusing effect so he could end it at once with this timing. Exactly what was he waiting for?

Paak

The flamed wings stretched as wide as they could. Around the axis of the end of one wing, the slowly turning preparation action right before an attack. Soon after,

Tak!

The wings folded, and it felt like that. It truly was a beak that pierces down in the blink of an eye. Against the attack that would be hard to block even as an S-Rank if you weren't specialized in defense, Han Yoohyun turned his body as little as possible and avoided it.

Then, a thin sword that he was suddenly holding out of nowhere cleverly burrowed into the tightly held wing.

Kwadeudeuk, the flesh tore and blood splattered and bone cracked.

-Bbiehkhk!

The Gold Beak Maiya clawed at the ground with its feet and rolled its body. While the ashes and sparks flying around covered the field of view, the bird took out the reserve wings and

hurriedly flew up.

-Bbiik! Kiik!

The wing that was half torn off by Yoohyun's blade was seen fluttering. The Maiya surged up high as if it was afraid.

That was strange. Didn't I definitely say that it had reserve wings? Why did he attack the wings instead of jumping up with Willow Leaves and directly aiming at the head? Of course, if you didn't have a type of flight skill, it would be standard to handle the wings first even if it had reserve ones, but...

'Could it be.'

Did he not get Green Willow Leaves yet? Then again, since it wasn't an initial skill, it could be that he didn't have it now. Shit, I messed up. He probably wouldn't lose, but it would probably take the entire day.

"Wow, Yoohyun oppa moves really cleanly."

Yerim admired. His title became 'oppa' again.

“But that bird bastard, would it be afraid and not come back down again? As expected, should I go help? Fly up with Guild Leader-.”

“Then you’ll burn to death.”

So what if you were S-Rank. You were at a low level without even fire resistance. And Sigh was only at the level of blocking indirect flames.

“Even if the area of Yoohyun’s fire resistance is quite wide, if you aren’t completely stuck to him in an embrace like I was a while ago, it can’t cover a whole other person. If you approached stuck like that, it would restrict your actions too much, and it’s highly possible you’d suffer instead. Still, Yoohyun might be unharmed, but Yerim, you’d probably barely survive.”

“But it seems like it won’t move from the sky. Isn’t it confining us here?”

“The boss has a strong instinct to protect its territory so it’ll eventually come down. Though it’ll take a long time.”

Thankfully, there was only one pair of reserve wings, so if we were lucky, only one more wing needed to be cut off and it would finally lose. If the directions didn’t match up or if it protected its wings well, it would probably take longer. I had to feed Peace, so would we be able to leave by dinner?

-Biik! Biik!

The extremely suffering bird just shrieked and didn't hastily try to lower its altitude. Still, seeing how it didn't completely run away, it seemed like it would soon come to attack again. Though the problem was when that would be.

-Biiii

Huh? It kind of seemed like that bird bastard was glancing towards us. Was it racking its brains, thinking that it wouldn't be overcome? And it was stealthily lowering its altitude.

Yoohyun must have noticed it too, because he moved toward us and used a skill.

"Green Willow Leaves!"

What, so he did hav... Hey! Why that!

Bafflingly, Yoohyun was only using Green Willow Leaves as a restraining skill to interrupt the opponent's field of vision and movement. So it wasn't that he didn't have it but that he was inexperienced in the ways of using the skill!

Then again, the skill explanation window didn't kindly teach things like 'step on these and jump up~'. If you only looked at the explanation window, you would think it was an

assistance skill for vision disturbance.

I raised my voice and yelled.

“Hey! Step on those!”

“What?”

“The leaves! Step on them and jump!”

After being shortly taken aback, Yoohyun jumped up. Then, the tips of his toes trampled on the green-tinted leaves. If they were normal leaves, they wouldn't have been able to handle the weight and would've fallen, but those green willow leaves swayed in the air as if they hadn't been affected at all.

The first few steps were awkward, but Han Yoohyun quickly got used to moving while stepping on the leaves, as benefiting a S-Rank stat holder.

His body raced through the air. The incredibly taken aback Maiya rushed at him, but he dodged as if he was on flat land, no, even easier than that. At the same time, he manipulated the group of leaves and disturbed the bird's sight.

-Bbiik!

The Gold Beak Maiya missed its enemy and was taken aback. In that short period, Yoohyun went up even higher than the bird. Specifically, above the flaming head.

‘So it’s done.’

As soon as I thought so, a spear blade was embedded into the top of the Maiya’s head and,

Puhuhk!

The bird’s head burst like a smashed pudding. That explosion was definitely an option for that spear; what was the spear’s name again?

Thud!

The bird, whose head was half blown away, dropped to the ground. Yoohyun stepped on the leaves that were still remaining and lightly landed on the ground. As expected, it ended quickly.

As soon as the bird died, a blue gate appeared where the original boss goat was.

“Hyung!”

Yoohyun ran to me with a very flushed face.

“That was impressive! To think that Green Willow Leaves can be used as a flight skill! I mean, it was a lot better than someone else putting a flight skill on me!”

He was pleased like a kid that had received presents for both Christmas and Children’s Day at the same time.

“I was the most regretful about not having a flight skill! To think that I had something that good and was letting it gather dust, it’s to the point that I feel stupid! But hyung realized an application method as soon as you saw it.”

No, it wasn’t something I discovered. Originally, Yoohyun, you were the one who... discovered it, was that right? I wasn’t sure. Soon, as Awakening Centers appeared and studies about Awakened People became livelier, large guilds would separately hire skill researchers.

“I got it, so calm down. It wasn’t anything much.”

“How is this not anything much? It’s as if you got a new skill. And an extremely necessary skill at that! I’m weak in long-range attacks in terms of characteristics, so flight monsters were the most complicated for me. But now, I don’t have to frustratingly get someone else’s

help! And anyways, guild members with flight assistance skills have low stat ranks so it was difficult to bring them along. It's really the best!"

Okay, alright. It was something to be pleased about. I'm happy since you're happy. But since you kept on admiring something I cheated with, this hyung was getting embarrassed.

"Rather than that, shouldn't we quickly go out? Everyone is probably worrying because the dungeon rank changed."

"Right, quite a lot of time passed, so the guild and Association must have been alerted. It must have been a fuss."

We quickly took the loot.

"If it's okay, should I look at your skills for you?"

I said, right before we went outside. During the Last Repayment, the skill application methods were relayed to me, so I knew more about this guy's skills than the current Yoohyun.

"Then it'd be great for me!"

Yoohyun replied, delightedly.

“I’ll set aside some time immediately, after just the new A-Rank dungeon attack.”

“Ahjussi, what about me?”

Yerim, who was listening to the conversation, cut in. What about you, punk.

“I already arranged things for you, more or less. Get to 30 levels, and then come back.”

Once three skills appeared, I should at least look at them. I didn’t know if it would help, but it would probably be better than Yerim thinking it over on her own.

When we came outside, as predicted, faces filled with uneasiness and anxiety were gathered there. It was to the point that a small cheer went up when they saw our unharmed appearances.

“It is a relief that you are unharmed, Guild Leader!”

“It seems like Hunter Bak Yerim also isn’t injured!”

Ah, of course, the concern was focused on Yoohyun and Yerim, and Myeongwoo and I were just Extra[1] 1 and 2. That was comfortable and it had to keep on being like that, but.

“Han Yoojin-ssi, are you alright.”

Kim Sunghan came toward me. No, you should inquire after your guild leader first. Why were you speaking to me first? And since it was the famous Haeyeon shield with a high sense of loyalty, everyone was looking here weirdly.

“I am alright. I’m fine.”

So take care of your guild leader instead. Please. Adding insult to injury, even that guy Yoohyun turned to look at me. Ack, the gaze was focused on me. Still, he was that dongsaeng who tried to hide me, so he probably wouldn’t say something unnecessary.

“It looks like I have to go to the Association, so go back to the guild with Sunghan.”

“Yeah, okay.”

Unlike inside the dungeon, it was a slightly stiff voice. As expected, when there were a lot of eyes around, he didn’t show it. It was a commendable attitude.

Of course Yoohyun, and even Yerim left first with the Hunter Association people. Inside the car on our way back to the guild, I opened my Status Window.

'I got 10 levels at the last moment, right? Definitely.'

You got a little bit of experience just from being near the boss monster. Thanks to that, a level up message window popped up, but there wasn't any news of a skill acquired window.

'As expected, the skills are the same. But this...'

A weird point stuck out. That is, it seemed like the color changed a little.

[Perfect Caregiver(L)]

Among my titles, Dragon Slayer was the same, but only Perfect Caregiver was in a different color.

It was kind of red. It was red. It was a red color. Did it get three times faster?

'This... kind of... seems like a landmine.'

I didn't think I could check. I wanted to just ignore it. But the problem was that it also seemed like I couldn't just ignore it.

Person who made the system, exactly what kind of intention was this? Can't you open the chatting window just once more as two-way?

Even though I mumbled to myself, there wasn't a following answer. I sighed once and opened the Perfect Caregiver title window. Thankfully, there wasn't much change with the other skills. Except for one.

[My Brat is the Best(L)]

This one also was a different color.

Wow, this was red. The landmine became red. Looking at this I really didn't think I could do it. It seemed like it was yelling 'I'm a trap'. But I couldn't just not check it for the rest of my life.

Ah whatever.

[My Brat is the Best(L) – The growth rate of the target who becomes influenced after hearing the keyword +100%(>∀<)/Good luck![2] $\neg(\wedge \square \wedge \neg)$

Duration time: 3 days

Already influenced target can use without keyword

Overlap use for same target is not allowed

Reuse standby time for the same target: 30 days

Keyword: I love you

※Inapplicable while the target is aware of the effect of the keyword

Influence completed targets(5)

(Han Yoohyun-S)(Bak

Yerim-S)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)
(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)
) (Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)

Next]

What 'good luck'. It's not cute, go away. Besides that, what was that 'standby', too. It wasn't like this originally.

Including the two filled out, it was as much as thirty, but 'next' was added. In a moment, I

felt like my brain was shorting out.

‘That, um... It wouldn’t be, no way.’

Was it telling me to fill the standby spaces? And seeing how Yoo Myeongwoo and Kim Sunghan weren’t there, with S-Ranks... fuck.

It must be crazy.

Even with Fear Resistance on, my heart was beating fast. If it was off, I definitely would have screamed.

‘Saying ‘found it’... was it talking about the Perfect Caregiver title, possibly the My Brat skill holder?’

And fuck, hook 30 S-Ranks? No, it was probably more than 30. Since I could flip next on the window.

‘I can’t, fuck I can’t even if I die. Even 30 is impossible, are you seriously crazy?’

As if the conscience of the bastard who made the system became extinct in the early evening. Domestic S-Ranks weren’t even ten, so was it saying to reel in through the world stage? Then at the very least, it should ease the conditions or something. I’d like to request

changing of the keyword and cancelling the weird additional effect. If you don't, I won't, I can't.

'I mean, in the first place, there's no reason for me to follow the instructions of a bastard whose face I don't even know.'

If it was going to make me do something crazy like this, it should explain detailedly or something. Not something like the 'good luck' emoticon, give an explanation, explain. Even in things like novels or comics, movies, these bastards always spoke vaguely so things got messed up; and now even in reality it was like that.

Explain! If you don't, then I also won't do it.

'I seriously got a dark history from just reeling in four, so am I so crazy that...'

Wait. It was definitely four. I checked the skill window again.

[Influence completed targets(5)]

...Why was it five?

[1] lit. 'background', which still makes sense in eng but I thought it sounded more natural to use 'extra'

[2] lit. the eng word 'fighting' transliterated as konglish slang

Chapter 35: < Repetitive Work Specialization >

< Repetitive Work Specialization >

I was frozen for a short while, and then I urgently went to the next page of the skill window.

[(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)
y)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Standby)(Stand
by)(Yoo Myeongwoo-F)(Kim Sunghan-A)(Peace-C)

Skill growth targets – Bak Yerim, Yoo Myeongwoo]

.....Peace? Wait, really our Peace? Even though a window about being influenced never came up?

‘Explain a little. Please explain a little. Give an explanation. If you just give a detailed usage instruction manual, really, no matter what I have to do, I’ll fill it with S-Ranks like you want, so please kindly explain a little.’

But a thick usage instruction manual didn't descend from the sky with light and the background music of trumpets. This crappy system.

Let's just think it over calmly and in earnest.

If it wasn't a system error.

The title was Perfect Caregiver, the skill's name was My Brat is the Best, and the keyword to influence was 'I love you'.

Until now, I had thought that the keyword was something that was applied in one blow after paying a lot of lip service.

But if I were really a proper caregiver, it was only right to consistently express my love towards my brats. Not just once.

'...Could it be that, me continuously telling Peace that I loved him was the proper way to use it, something like that?'

There was no way for me to know which way was the right one. But thinking of the caregiver title, it seemed like steadily heaping affection and influencing them was the answer.

At any rate, the end justifies the means[1].

‘Still, with this, it’s definitely possible to raise monsters now.’

I was worrying about what I should do if the keyword happened to not be applied to Peace, but I was relieved of a big worry. And I could probably substitute the system’s crazy demand with monsters.

Of course, filling it with 50 S-Rank monsters wasn’t an easy task either. First, I had to have them to raise them. It was extremely rare for S-Rank dungeons’ middle bosses or boss monsters to come with a baby. And since I had to capture them alive, the level of difficulty in obtaining them was atrocious.

‘Even if people caught one with good luck, if they confirm that it is impossible to grow, then they probably would kill it. Even up to 5 years from now, there were barely any cases of raising monsters to adulthood.’

It wasn’t that there weren’t any at all. In those cases, it probably was that the conditions happened to be met. They were all low rank monsters, so it was highly likely that the growth conditions were easy.

‘Unless some guy pops up suddenly out of nowhere with a monster-rearing special skill, probably only I would be able to raise high rank familiars[2].’

I should try to negotiate with the giant guilds with this. If you would guarantee my safety, I will impartially raise one at a time. Of course, I would receive the reward separately.

It would be better that way than being monopolized by one place, so mediating wouldn't be difficult. Then Yoohyun would definitely be able to worry less.

Of course there would probably be a lot of salivating bastards going 'come~ there's a little F-Rank with a money-making skill rolling around', but I wouldn't need to concern myself with the small fries. I would just need to be a little careful until I got my exclusive use magic beasts.

Would they go so far as to go into the Haeyeon Guild building and try to kidnap me?

Thanks to Peace, I arrived at the guild in a good mood.

First of all, there were a total of 48 standby slots. No matter what kind of crazy guy who made the system was, they wouldn't expect me to fill them in a few days. In the first place, why did I have to do it? I refuse until you tell me the reason, it's a strike.

"Hey, Yoojin."

I was about to quickly go up and give Peace a kiss or something, when Yoo Myeongwoo started talking to me with a face like he was going to die and a voice that was dying away. Why was this guy like this again?

“The first dungeon was pretty brutal, right? This was a special case, so don’t worry, and let’s hurry up and return the equipment and go up to rest.”

You had to rest well today and start the physical labor tomorrow. And sell the magic stones to buy bladed tools. Instead of new ones, would older ones be better? Should I search a junk shop?

“No, I’m... definitely not a guy who can do this I think.”

Said the guy who would get an SS-Rank skill after suffering for a little bit. It was something that would make the entire country’s millions of FF-Ranks throw rocks.

“In the end, I didn’t even get... a skill with 10 levels.....”

“There’s really nothing to worry about. They said cases when they appear late are common. Hey, I didn’t get a skill with 10 levels either.”

“Huh? You too?”

“That’s right. My level went up when Yoohyun was catching the bird bastard. But I didn’t get anything.”

Even with the consolation that we were both in the same boat, Myeongwoo didn't regain his energy, unlike normal.

"Still, you're completely different from a guy like me. Your dongsaeng, he seemed really happy. If you're someone who can give that kind of advice, something like your class[3] must be somehow good? You're really special."

His look when he said so was gloomy like he would crawl into a hole[4]. It seemed like his state was a little more severe than normal. What should I do? Should I give him alcohol to drink?

"First let's go up and talk, go up."

"No, I think it's only right for me to start to leave. They said there's only theory left for the novice training too. I should probably be able to continue that at the Association. No, I don't think there's any need for me to take that either. I don't really think I can do something like a dungeon attack. I'm sorry I made you waste time on someone like me. Still, I was really thankful. I won't be able to forget you for the rest of my life."

Yoo Myeongwoo mumbled like he was saying his will or something. It wasn't a little, but a lot more severe. If I sent him away like this, it seemed, from his face, like he would try to commit suicide again.

Was it because he was forced to interact with S-Ranks? It seemed like I was one of the causes too.

Even if I said ‘actually you have the aptitude to get an SS-Rank production skill!’ he wouldn’t be convinced. It wasn’t something you could believe normally, so if I said it now it might have the opposite effect instead.

And anyways, revealing the skill – Myeongwoo was a great guy but I didn’t have enough confidence in him to do that. Something that I hadn’t even told in detail to my younger brother.

“If you think that way, then I can’t really do anything about it.”

I gave a big sigh and continued speaking.

“I don’t intend to force you to stay. It’s just... I got really good information, but now I don’t have a use for it so it’s a little regretful.”

I really did have a really good piece of information. An amazing one.

“...Information?”

“Yeah. It’s information that would really help you a lot. But seeing how you’re having a hard

time... I would feel sorry making you suffer more. It's regretful, but if you don't want to, I won't force you. They say you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.[5]"

Sighing deeply, I searched Yoo Myeongwoo's gaze.

"Before you go, do you want to hear about it just once? It's really precious information. So..."

I lowered my voice and said as if whispering.

"You know Suk Hayan-ssi, right? The young lady who was in charge of the theory class a few days ago. She's a genius who received a license to be a professor at that young age, and she's pretty deep into studies about Awakened People. And her family is influential so she has a lot of all sorts of important information."

"R-really? That person?"

"Yeah. Normally, I can't tell others, but I got something specially. You can't ever tell anyone that you heard this from someone, okay? Only you can know."

Myeongwoo immediately nodded his head. Only to you specially, only you know. It was a magic phrase that hooked in people.

“You know weapon-related assistance skills. Like your Whetstone.”

“Yeah... what about it?”

“There’s a training drill to make Awakened People who have those kinds of skills get a really great, special skill.”

“A training drill... to get a special skill?”

“That’s right. Of course, it’s not easy. Still, if you diligently, quickly finish the drill, according to your luck, you could get a really great skill.”

“I don’t really have much luck...”

“What do you mean you don’t? Hey, just hearing about this is great luck. And it’s guaranteed to be at least a C-Rank. If you have a C-Rank assistance skill, you know there’s a~bsolutely no obstacle to living well, right?”

Saying SS-Rank would seem like too much of a scam, so around C-Rank seemed to be sufficient.

“.....Really?”

The light returned to the eyes of Myeongwoo, who had seemed like a dead frozen pollack. Then, then. It's real, right? Believe just in me.

"It's just that it's pretty hard..."

"How hard is it?"

"You know bladed tools, right? Like knives or scissors. You have to sharpen them. Exactly ten thousand of them."

Yoo Myeongwoo's mouth dropped open.

"Te-ten thousand...?"

"Yeah. It's definitely hard, right? I don't want to see you suffer either..."

"You just have to do ten thousand? Really?!"

Myeongwoo yelled as if cheering. The light in his eyes hadn't just revived but was on fire. What, do you happen to like physical labor?

“...That’s right. Though rather than ‘just’, it’s quite a lot.”

“No, it’s not that much. If I sharpen a hundred each day, I’ll finish in exactly one hundred days!”

“A hundred each...?”

In just a hundred days? To finish that fast, even if you said one took ten minutes, that was 6 in one hour and you had to work for seventeen hours, and eat and sleep in the remaining seven hours...

“.....Do it slowly, slowly.”

It was good to be passionate, but first you had to be alive to use the SS-Rank skill.

“Slowly? Should I do fifty each? But then it’ll take long... Troubling you[6] for that long is a bit.....”

“It’s okay. Your food is tasty.”

It was true. And as time went on, he became even more capable so it was to the extent of

anticipation. Did he have any cooking related skills?

“So, don’t worry. Instead of me, it would probably be harder on you? Shutting yourself in somewhere and only sharpening knives all day wouldn’t be easy.”

“Don’t worry. There was a time when I was young when I was engrossed in making a model of the Battle of Hamsan[7]. I won a prize with it too. I have confidence in doing repetitive work all day in a house corner!”

Is that so. Was this nature also related to skill aptitude? It might be that he would roll out equipment like a factory after he gets Forge.

“Ah, I’ll take and put away the equipment. Yoojin, you go up first and rest.”

I was about to say it was okay but then I just gave him the equipment. If these little things were helpful, he would probably feel less burdened.

Really, being too kindhearted was a problem.

Then again, if he was someone who gobbled up anything given and didn’t know to be thankful, I would have thrown him away first. Since, if he betrayed me after getting the SS-Rank skill, it would be worse than not having one. And the keyword influence effect would be useless if there wasn’t a caregiver model.

It was because Yoo Myeongwoo was a trustable character that I was able to grab onto him to this extent.

“Yoojin, seriously, thank you. I’ll work hard and pay it all back to you. Definitely.”

Myeongwoo said, before he turned. If you’re that thankful, just make me a good piece of equipment later or something.

I figured out the matter of Myeongwoo and went towards the dorm floor with light footsteps. Now I really only needed to wait and then just take the harvest. Everything was mostly done, hooray.

Time to play~ I’m going to slack off a lot~. The house was big and the days would get hot and I would turn the A/C on full and roll around all day with Peace. I was going to stop caring about the weirdly changed status window and such.

If you want to make me work, please descend[8] down directly, person who made the system. Definitely with the instruction manual.

Cheerfully[9], I opened the door. The ‘click’ noise was so heartwarming. I should cursorily get through the remaining theory class and then become one with the sofa. Thanks to my dear dongsaeng-nim, I packed a ton of magic stones and wouldn’t have to worry about money. Should I buy some more stocks? Or should I pick out a car? Right, I should get my driver’s

license first.

As soon as I entered, a bright light shone on the entrance. Across from the shoe rack, the smiling face of a man was reflected on the full-length mirror.

I didn't know who it was[10] but his expression looked quite good. It seems to be a face of one who would play and live well.

But, behind him, there was another person wearing mourning clothe...

Something clammy suddenly grabbed my ankle. Then, it pulled firmly. Ack, wait, that's a foul-!

Bam!

I barely dodged to the side to avoid hitting my head against the steel frame of the inner door and fell.

Fuck, Dokkaebi, this bastard, I told you to scare me, not to make an assassination attempt. I'm weak. Really weak. Don't take an F-Rank's weakness lightly.

“Ughhh, my hip... knee... arm...”

I only defended my head and hit everything else. It seemed like I would become one with the bed instead of the sofa.

“I didn’t think you would fall down that easily!”

“...Apologize first.”

“Sorry!”

A good child who listens well gets 1 point. When I tried to stand up, staggering, a hand stretched out from behind me and supported me. Ughh, my entire body was stiff. To think I would go around a dungeon unharmed and then get injured at my house entrance. Did I have luck or not? Did I have a pain relief patch at home?

When I turned around, I saw the mask-wearing Dokkaebi crying. They wouldn’t have come here wearing it from the start, so did they put it on in the meantime?

Looking at that unfunny appearance, I lost the intention to get mad too.

“You came later than I had thought?”

At my words, the Dokkaebi's two shoulders drooped down.

".....I got scolded."

"You got scolded?"

"I got scolded a lot! I got nagged at for two days for signing a contract as I please!"

Well. It seemed like Subordinates 1 and 2 were close to being guardians. Just how old were they? Since they didn't say anything about the contract being invalid, they were probably at least over fully 14 years. Just looking at their height, they were an adult, but were they immature mentally?

"Still, I talked big that it'd be okay because I could win! It wasn't scary?"

"Rather than being scary, I was about to go on the road to the underworld."

"Usually the moment when you get home is the most careless moment..."

The Dokkaebi said sullenly. I was certainly careless. Still, putting aside the resistance skill, even if I thought of it objectively, the time at the classroom seemed scarier. Was it because

of Suk Hayan? The screaming had a big impact. Sound really was important.

“There’s still chances left, so hang in there.”

Of course, I had no intention of losing on purpose though.

“Yeah! I’ll work hard!”

“And go to a drugstore and buy a pain relief patch.”

“P-pain relief patch?”

“Quickly. Right now. One that works well.”

Saying ‘okay’, the Dokkaebi suddenly disappeared. It sure was comfortable. Did you hear, person who made the system? Teleportation for me too, please.

[1] lit. sth like ‘even if you go sideways/diagonally, you just have to get to Seoul, that’s it’. It also means ‘no matter what path you take, you just have to get to your goal’, which I personally feel has a slightly different connotation than ‘the end justifies the means’ and suits this context better, but ‘the ends justifies the means’ is a lot smoother/flows better... rolls off the tongue nicer??

[2] So I tried looking up 기승수 again and found nothing useful. All I'm (99%) certain about is that 수 definitely has to be 'beast'. I'm also 90% sure that 기 is 技(talent, aptitude)/伎(talent, skill). 승 could be 承(connect, inherit?!, support) or possibly even 乘(ride). Whatever it is, I'm keeping 'familiar' even if it ends up not exactly being a familiar bc at this point it seems to be a pet/combat-support monster, and you can possibly stretch the definition of familiar to that I guess. It's a made-up word so to tl, I'd have to use the exact word, make up a new word, or twist similar existing ones to fit it anyways, so...

[3] he uses a word that means 'rank, class, grade,' that had been sometimes used interchangeably with the 'rank' in stuff like 's-rank', but I didn't think he was talking about that kind of rank bc then the sentence doesn't make sense, but idk

[4] lit. 'dig a hole and go inside' but I think this is what it means

[5] lit. 'if one doesn't even want to be a pyeongyang mayor, then that's that' where pyeongyang (as in the current capital of n.k.) used to be a major city in joseon (what kr was called bf the war & division) so being assigned as the official/mayor of there by the king was a rly good position but if u don't want to do sth that's good for you, then there's nothing anybody can do abt it.

[6] this is that 'owe you' phrase that you can use to mean to stay over at someone's house, from ch. 23 (see footnote [1]), which I just realized has a similar eng equiv with 'trouble you'

[7] it's actually the 'great victory [of/at] hansen' in krn but apparently it's officially called this

in eng. It's a famous naval battle by a really famous admiral (Yi Sun-Shin) in krn history against the jpn.

[8] this is a word that specifically means 'a god comes down to the mortal world'

[9] lit. 'looloolala' which is analogous to eng 'lalala' (as in like singing) and used to signal being cheerful or excited, but using it that way sounded weird in eng

[10] he's probably being... well not sarcastic, but funny, bc he's talking about himself. This and the following sentence are in honorific speech to further highlight that.

Chapter 36: < Magic Beast Trainer (1) >

< Magic Beast Trainer (1) >

"Peace~."

After receiving the pain relief patch that the Dokkaebi bought, I banished them and went towards the living room. Inside the pen, Peace was leaping from side to side as he greeted me. A guy who got cuter each time I saw him.

As always, I held Peace in my arms and petted the back of his neck. It was nice to hear the purring.

Now the days when I could go around holding him wouldn't last much longer. When the growth started, he would probably quickly get bigger than me. I was a little regretful.

"You can't pretend not to know Dad just because you're all grown."

Did monsters also have something like puberty? If he was like 'Dad I hate you' and swung his front paws, at the least it would be hospitalization. Our Peace was good, so something like that probably wouldn't happen.

I lowered Peace to the floor and used the My Brat skill. Soon, a Message Window popped up in front of my eyes.

[My Brat is the Best(L) Growth effect is applied to target Peace for 3 days!

2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies – Horned Flame Lion Peace's time required for adult transformation(365:00) Effect duration time(72:00)

Dun, Caregiver can grow target without waiting

Long

By shortening the total time required

For adult transformation by training the target.]

...If it was as usual, it would be done with 'effect duration time(72:00)', but there was an explanation added. And there were typos. No, it didn't seem like normal typos.

'They purposefully put in typos.'

You could see at one glance that it was a vertical wordplay[1]. Normally, it should be 'but'[2] and then continue, but they pretended to make a typo with 'dun'. If you read vertically,

Coming to dungeon.

Now they were even sending down instructions with the explanation window. Wow, impressive. I was truly curious about what kind of person they were.

'Why were they telling me to come to a dungeon?'

Seeing how they were going this far, it seemed like they could only send the chatting window and talk inside a dungeon, like in the D-Rank dungeon. It seemed like there probably was some kind of restriction outside of a dungeon. So that was probably why they wrote the vertical wordplay in the explanation window like this.

I didn't know who it was, but as expected, they weren't omnipotent.

'Seeing how they couldn't find me before I went into a dungeon, it seemed like there wasn't much they could do outside of dungeons, in this world. Was that why they were telling me to come to a dungeon?'

But why would I trust them and go? What would I do if I went and another mistake occurred and this time an S-Rank boss monster came out?

I'm sorry, but person, or maybe people, who made the system, it had been a long time already since my trust and such in you hit rock bottom. If it wasn't Yoohyun and I had gone in with a normal A-Rank training instructor, I might have already crossed to the other side[3].

So let's pretend I didn't see it. Something wouldn't happen because I ignored the message, right?

'.....It's a problem because it feels like something would happen.'

Fuck, what would be the possibility of them being an existence, possibly a godly existence, who sent a verbal wordplay for no reason? Why me of all people and leave alone the all the scattered around S-Ranks? Was it because I regressed? Should I have begged 'please get rid of the damned dungeons and Awakened People' while holding the Wish Stone, instead?

-Kkiang?

Since I was standing blankly lost in my thoughts, Pease cried softly as if asking what was going on.

"It's nothing. Just..."

It seemed like this dad was caught by a bastard who's probably weird and crazy. I held Peace again and swallowed a sigh.

Why couldn't a person be left to live comfortably? I only wanted to live lazing around. It wasn't that greedy.

"Whew, even if I thought long about it, what use would that be?"

At any rate, the choices were only two. Ignoring it, or obediently going into a dungeon. It wasn't like there was someone I could consult, going 'so the system sent this message to me'. Even after 5 years, people couldn't figure out the letter s of the system[4], so it would be even worse now.

That an F-Rank who graduated with the GED knew the most in the world about Awakened People and the dungeon system, so what. It was really 'so what'.

‘For now, let’s grow Peace first.’

Since growth would be faster with training, that at least was good news. Let’s think about going into a dungeon after Peace becomes an adult. If it was urgent, I would probably receive contact somehow.

“But do I have to directly give the training?”

It seemed so since it told the caregiver to give it. How was I supposed to do it? Fetching a ball? Throwing a frisbee? First, I should borrow a training room.

Since I was already planning on revealing that I was going to raise[5] magic beasts, I should tell Yoohyun first. It would probably be natural if I said that I had just gotten 10 levels, and then got a rearing skill while playing with Peace.

I would get help from Haeyeon, and I could dump the matter with negotiating with the giant guilds on Suk Simyeong. Since he worked me hard for free, I should also try working him hard.

[Are you free for dinner?]

I sent a text to Yoohyun. Maybe he was busy settling things at the Association, because the

reply was a little slow.

[ye][6]

[I have something to say. I'll see you at home.]

I wrote 'your house', and then fixed it. Since this guy thought of his house as our house.

The second reply was slower.

I stuck on the pain relief patch but Peace made a fuss so I took it off again, and I told Yoo Myeongwoo about sharpening the ten thousand knives when he returned home from returning the equipment; after that, the text came while I was throwing balls for Peace to try out the training effect.

[I believe hyung.]

Oh ho, he sure was saying something cute. It seemed like he was concerned about telling me that I had gotten weird when we were in the dungeon. Did he think I had asked to meet so I could justify my suspicious actions?

[I'll buy alcohol.]

Your fridge looked too healthy. And now that I had thought of it, I hadn't ever drunken alcohol with my dongsaeng yet. We had already had a bad relationship when Yoohyun had peeled off his 'minor' label. Though there were instances where only I was drunk when I crawled back home.

He wouldn't still be inexperienced, right? Even if it was his first time drinking, with his S-Rank stats, he probably wouldn't get drunk easily. And I couldn't get drunk either. Why was it like this.

A day would probably come when I would relax and turn off my skill.

I went toward my dongsaeng's house with Peace in one hand and a bag full of alcohol bottles and snacks in the other. I didn't buy the alcohol; when I inquired maintenance, they had prepared it for me. With high class ones that I didn't really know the names of.

I had just wanted some beer that was just a little expensive.

The employee in charge of liquor called over by maintenance was like, with a brightly smiling face, 'these wouldn't get even a stat B-Rank drunk', and spread out alcohol with proofs that were through the roof. Wine for cleaning your palate was mixed in. There was something about Grand Cru whatever, I didn't know, and it was obvious that you would feeling guilty walking around with a bag of that dangling from your hands.

Though it didn't matter since it was charged to Yoohyun.

Inside the house was quiet like the first time I was there. It really was too big of a place to live alone. It was too early to marry, but at least date.

"You're here?"

When I laid out the alcohol bottles and snacks on the table and sat down on the sofa, Yoohyun appeared shortly after. He must have just come out after washing, because his hair was wet. The bird bastard's blood did splatter a lot.

"They must have kept you for quite a while at the Association."

"Since it was rare situation. And I took care of other things while I was at it."

Yoohyun sat down on a separate armchair[7], bringing over a glass. When that guy saw the alcohol bottles on the table, he wrinkled his forehead slightly.

"Aren't they too strong?"

So he could tell. So it wasn't his first time. I was pointlessly regretful.

“Just a few days ago, you were carried back.”

“Don’t worry. I’m going to drink reasonably today. And anyways, it’s at home.”

What issue was there if I became a dog[8] at home? Though there was no need to get drunk.

“Speaking of, it would be hard for even the Dokkaebi to come in here, right?”

Portal travel was only possible for one at a time, so even if they hid, they would get caught. And the location was hidden so teleportation would be hard too.

“It wouldn’t be impossible.”

Yoohyun said, opening an alcohol bottle.

“Since there are windows. If they searched one by one with teleportation, they would eventually find it.”

They didn’t seem to have a personality that would do something troublesome like that. To avoid the Dokkaebi, did you need to have a darkroom in a shrewdly[9] hidden location, on

top of portal travel?

“You don’t have to worry about the Dokkaebi. Even just for their own safety, they’ll definitely keep your secrets. If you just forget their unpleasant points, then they really are useful.”

“Like when you contact them secretly?”

“There’s that too, but when you make an appointment with someone you don’t trust and who doesn’t trust you back, if you go through the Dokkaebi, they also check the safety for you. Thanks to that, it’s to the extent that they’re necessary for Unawakaened high-ranking officials.”

So they did that kind of service too. Whether it was for the Dokkaebi or for me, as expected, it would be better to keep our contract a secret. Even if you said there was a clause in the contract that we wouldn’t tell others’ secrets, people high up would definitely feel uneasy.

“But speaking of the Dokkaebi, don’t they seem young when you see them?”

“Hm? Well they do have an unusual personality. Still, they handle their work accurately and meticulously. Rather than young, wouldn’t it be more of a concept? There are a few Hunters who make a character based on their abilities and act it out.”

Was it like that? Then again, even when we were filling out the contract, rather than being like a young kid, they were really thorough in figuring out various conditions.

They were probably deep into the character of the Dokkaebi instead of being young, like Yoohyun said. The way they acted was exactly like a dokkaebi from a traditional fairy tale. Liking pranks, trying to scare people, and being versatile while also having a simple side.

If I lent them money, would they keep paying me back everyday?

I soothingly petted Peace, who wanted to try playing with the sparkling glass bottles, and raised the glass of alcohol that my dongsaeng had poured out for me. Hm... Was it about 20 mL? Look here, dongsaeng-nim. The alcohol was only wetting the bottom of the glass.

"This is a little too harsh. It wouldn't even be one sip."

"I said it was strong. Just drink one sip at a time."

And then he filled his glass halfway.

"I'm not that weak to alcohol, okay?"

I had been drinking five years, no ten years, longer than you. Complaining, I emptied the glass and grabbed the alcohol bottle. What, punk, so what if you scowl at me. Are you going to snatch it away?

“It only says its strong, I can’t even feel it at all.”

I really couldn’t feel it. Just the smell was nice and pungent; I could only tell that it was pretty good to drink. Maybe it was like that because it was expensive, but even without the drunk feeling, it was fine.

“Don’t look so sullen, and you take a glass too. It’s the first.”

After hesitating for a bit, Yoohyun emptied his glass in one go and held it out. Seeing that, I felt a little strange.

Before the regression, I didn’t even think of doing something like exchanging drinks. No, until the world changed, I thought there would be a day when I would drink with my dongsaeng.

I had once thought that it would be obvious I would teach my dongsaeng how to drink, pouring him a glass like this, though of course a cheap one, after he finished the CSAT.

“You were a good dongsaeng.”

There were so many things I was lacking in, but he didn’t even complain, unlike a young kid.

“Of course, you’re still a good dongsaeng.”

I smiled, completely filling up the empty glass for him. He acted a little annoying but that was because of the skill. Even if it wasn't the skill, it was because he was worrying about me.

"...You're saying I was a good dongsaeng."

Yoohyun muttered, bitterly. It was true you were good. And you were a model student. That guy's expression was so sour that I was about to ask if there maybe was a time when he made trouble without me knowing, when Yoohyun spoke first.

"What was it you wanted to say?"

"Oh yeah, that."

I continued speaking while petting Peace, who was purring on my lap.

"It's because of the skill at 10 levels."

"Skill? Then again, you were nearby when I was exterminating the boss monster, so you must have gotten some experience. Since it was at the level of about an A-Rank dungeon, there was probably more than just the level up. What kind of skill was it?"

“Magic beast trainer.”

Since, rather than monsters, it seemed like there were more magic beasts.

“...Magic beast, trainer?”

Yoohyun’s gaze went down toward Peace. Feeling the gaze, Peace slightly bared his teeth as if he didn’t like it. He was someone who would become your partner from now on, so don’t be like that.

“Yeah. It seems like taking care of Peace affected even the skill. The skill rank is S-Rank and-.”

“S-Rank?!”

My dongsaeng’s expression became severe.

“You’re stat F, but the skill is... and a special skill at that, is S.....”

“Hey, don’t think something weird.”

I would leave the house if he talked about locking me up or whatever again.

“But hyung-.”

“But what[10], don’t say something useless and just listen. The skill effect is, like the name, raising magic beasts, monsters. Specifically, it’s causing them to grow. They said Peace, the baby Horned Flame Lion, wouldn’t grow, right? Baby Horned Flame Lions originally can’t grow without an adult’s help. But if I use my skill, the growth is possible. With the taming in place.”

A tamed Horned Flame Lion adult.

More than anyone else, Han Yoohyun, that guy, would know the value of that.

A silence fell. Peace wagged his tail.

After a long time, Yoohyun opened his mouth, with a complicated expression.

“But, then hyung would.”

“You’re saying ‘but’ again. Just think. How many S-Ranks are there who need high ranking familiars right now?”

“...All of them. Since you can’t use mid- to low-rank familiars in S-Rank dungeons. It would be burdensome even for the giant guilds to use them as single-use, so they’re at the level to taking along occasionally on a first attack. The probability of a mid- to low-rank familiar surviving an S-Rank dungeon is extremely small.”

A slightly blank voice continued explaining.

“So, not from only S-Ranks, there is a demand from all team members. Even if it wasn’t a highest rank, like a Horned Flame Lion, and was only at the level of being able to endure an S-Rank dungeon, not only from the country, but people from all over the world would come gather around.”

After finishing what he was saying, Yoohyun covered his face with his hand and gave a long sigh. Looking at that, I smiled.

“If the demand is at that level, it wouldn’t be hard to mediate, right?”

“...For that, of course, really..... The advice during the day also was like that...”

Yoohyun lowered the hand covering his face. The expression like his soul had slightly left was funny. It was a little cute too. I thought of when he was young.

“Hyung really is the best.”

Don't mention it.

[1] where you read the first letter (syllable, in the case of krn, bc that's how krn is written) of each sentence/line vertically to get a new different sentence/phrase

[2] 'dan', also used in these cases to mean 'exception:'

[3] lit. 'cross the jordan river' again. I thought this was a more similar phrase maybe than 'go to heaven'. If it comes up again, I'll just do either of the two.

[4] common metaphorical way to say that they couldn't find anything, similar to 'couldn't find a single hair', etc.

[5] so the word I've been using for 'trainer' in this ch. contains the word for 'to rear, raise [animals]' bc it's 사육사 (사육 = to rear, -사 = someone w an expertise) but the word itself means 'animal trainer, zookeeper, sb who raises and trains animals at a zoo'. It would be better if I used the same root word for both, but I felt like it was truer to the text to keep it as 'rear' instead of 'train' but I wasn't about to use 'rearer' or even worse 'breeder'

[6] yh sent 'ㅇㅇ' which is text-speak shorthand for 응, or 'yeah' but I thought if I just used 'y' then it would seem like 'why'

[7] it was lit. '1-person-use sofa' so I'm assuming it was sth like an armchair

[8] 'dog' isn't really quite to the point of being a swear but it's loosely used as a bad thing. It can work that way in eng too but I wasn't sure if it made sense or not, hence the footnote.

[9] the word used is 교묘하게 which might be a misspelling of 교묘하게? It's not in the dict, neither the krn-eng one or the krn one. I tl'ed it as 교묘하게 bc idk what 교묘하게 means so this part might be wrong, sorry.

[10] he actually uses reduplication (ex: fancy schmancy) with the word 'but' but there's no similar phrase in eng

Chapter 37: < Magic Beast Trainer (2) >

< Magic Beast Trainer (2) >

Emptying our glasses, we organized what we had to do from now on.

We decided that raising the familiars would be in collaboration with Haeyeon. It was because it would be too hard for me alone to handle the negotiations with the giant guilds. It was

also annoying. There were people who would do it well for me, so why would I choose to suffer?

“As a Hunter, you’re going to remain unaffiliated, right?”

At Yoohyun’s question, I nodded.

“If I contract to be a Hunter with Haeyeon, the number of people on their guards would increase. Even if it’s rare, there’s a difference between having a chance and not having one.”

Even if I didn’t, I was the Haeyeon Guild Leader’s family, so if you added a contract on top of that, they would try to stomp me down before I got bigger. There were tons of bastards in the world who would spit on things they couldn’t have.

“At least outwardly, I should be impartial. If Haeyeon happens to seize the country’s Hunter community, then I’ll contract for you.”

“It won’t take long.”

That guy Yoohyun said, confidently. Even originally, he suppressed them in 5 years, so if you added Yerim and even Myeongwoo, it would be even faster. And it was possible to grow Kim Sunghan to an S-Rank. ...Would Suk Hayan also stick to Haeyeon? Since she was Suk Simyeong’s niece... I felt like I was giving a lot more than I had thought.

Eh, so what. It would be good if Haeyeon quickly got bigger. And it wasn't like Yoohyun would betray me.

"Like we said before, we can put the price of Haeyeon's protection as raising Peace for you. Let's get to a specific contract after the attack on the new A-Rank dungeon. You said you're going in for the attack in 3 days, right?"

"Yeah. I should send out people to auction houses and sweep up monster babies and eggs."

"I don't need mid- to low-rank, and would there even be any high-rank ones?"

"If we check overseas too, there might be a few as bad stock? Since they're just expensive and don't have much use. I should contract a tamer too."

...He wouldn't be dumping fifteen or so at a time, right? I would be busy just with feeding all the kids.

"I can't raise a lot at one time."

Just in case, I told him ahead of time. And it was true that there was a limitation. It took time even just influencing them and I had to directly train them for fast growth to be possible.

So looking after about three to four together probably was a reasonable amount.

“Really? How many can you do?”

“Three is reasonable and five at maximum. The growth speed decreases as the number increases.”

“You’re going to set aside one placement for Haeyeon, right? Even if we get two to three at a time, we need ten for even just the S-Rank team.”

“...Ten?”

“Yeah, since an S-Rank attack team is comprised of at least 20 or more.”

Uh... Suddenly it felt like a warning light was turning on that I would become a physical laborer. I just wanted to live well and without greed, reasonably raising some. How long would it take if I had to raise ten?

Since they would be high rank, if you said they would take more than twice as long to grow than Peace, even if I raised five at one time, it would take a full three to four months.

And before all that, the start was ten. For just Haeyeon. And recognizing his intentions, it seemed to me like he wanted to fill up with one per person if possible.

“.....It’s already starting to get annoying.”

I pulled Peace into my arms and buried my body into the back of the sofa. I had thought too simply. Even if I trained only the highest ranks and just used the skill on high ranks, I had to feed and look after all of them until they were influenced. With all my sincerity, full of affection.

Far from marriage, I hadn’t even dated, but I was starting with infant care hell.

“Familiars aren’t required for dungeon attacks so wouldn’t it be okay to raise them slowly?”

“They’re not required but just having them would make the pace of the attack much faster.”

“How much?”

“For an S-Rank dungeon attack, it would decrease as much as half or more probably?”

“What? Half?”

“Even the D-Rank dungeon we went to today, we walked for a long time, right? It’s more so for S-Ranks. For personally running, stamina conservation is a problem and the speed too is a lot slower compared to a four-legged monster of the same rank. So it definitely becomes faster in various ways.”

Ah, shit. It was even more of a hit than I thought.

I didn’t know it would make that much of a difference. Was this the difference between an actual hands-on worker and a guy that only knew theory? Even so, I couldn’t say I wanted to slack off after hearing that.

Decreasing a high rank dungeon attack time by half meant that the dungeon’s safety became twice as much. Right now, the number of high rank dungeons was small, but after two to three years, the number of Awakened People started to become difficult to cover the number of dungeons with.

Naturally, the danger of dungeon breaks also became bigger.

But if it was after familiars were supplied, the story would completely change.

‘Even decreasing the attack time by exactly 30% was similar to the S-Rank attack team increasing by 30%... whew.’

A world that was as much as more than 30% safer... My conscience... sense of morals... ethics.....

I'll just work diligently. Yes. It wasn't like there were that many S-Rank attack teams, and it would probably stop at some point. I demand a retirement as a happy rich man before 40.

"...For now, give me a training room right away first. I've used my skill on Peace so the effect duration only has 2 and a half days left. I have to raise him as much as possible to provide proof at the negotiation table."

"Right now? It's late."

"Staying up the night isn't that hard. And Peace has to rest too so I'll rest at least during spare moments."

"Still, don't do it too excessively. If you're going to record it, you probably need filming equipment, right?"

"Yeah."

While Yoohyun was making the phone call, I stretched out and laid down completely on the sofa. It hadn't been long since I decided to become one with the sofa, but it was like this now. My hurt hip throbbed anew.

‘Person who made the system, I’m going to be busy for a while so please don’t contact me.’

Have to raise the kids. I am handing in my parental leave.

The place Yoohyun gave me was none other than the novice Hunter practice room.

It was a large space that would still have room left over after the still young Horned Flame Lion ran around to his heart’s content, and various machines for training were provided. On top of that.

“There are ten Tooth Moles.”

They even handed over monsters.

“They were weakened, for both novice training and skill experiment use, enough so that even F-Ranks can handle them, but please do not take out more than two at a time.”

The practice room manager said, gesturing to the pen. The manager here was an Awakened Person, unlike other places, maybe for handling monsters. Stat D-Rank with defense specialization, looking at the optimized skills.

“In the case of an incident, please press the emergency call button immediately. Please refer to this booklet for usage instructions for the training machines.”

After finishing the explanation, the manager threw a disbelieving glance at me and then went out.

I had to keep secret about raising magic beasts before entering negotiations with the giant guilds, so I put it as borrowing the practice room to train myself, not Peace. To think that an F-Rank would piggyback his dongsaeng and use the guild’s entire practice room, I would probably get criticized a little.

“Okay, Peace. Obediently stay sitting here.”

First, in order to record Peace’s current state, I sat him next to the Tooth Moles’ pen. The front of the pen was transparent so I could definitely compare the sizes of the two monsters.

-Keureureung

Peace showed interest in the Tooth Moles and bared his canines. The Tooth Moles also kept on shaking their front feet with long claws back at him. Maybe because they were low rank monsters, they were stupid. They couldn’t recognize their opponent.

“You can’t. Sit down again. Good.”

I turned on the camcorder fixed onto a tripod and recorded Peace's appearance.

"2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies Horned Flame Lion juvenile[1], did not grow for two months after capture. Body length 41cm, body weight 2.8kg. Currently, it is magic beast rearing skill application 1st day, 11:21 pm."

After the explanation, I turned the sound recording function off. Then, I placed on the table a large clock with a timing function that I had prepared beforehand, and wrote down the current time and the remaining growth time for Peace into a notebook.

"What should I start with?"

First, I had to use each training equipment one at a time to check the efficiency and reactivity. For the first one, I poured balls into a pitching machine.

'Since I don't know if it would work if I used machines.'

When I had directly thrown a ball for Peace, the decrease in growth time per 10 minutes was about 18 minutes. Throwing for one hour would be an additional decrease of 48 minutes, so the efficiency was quite good. If my shoulder could last, that is.

“Peace, look here!”

-Kkiang?

Peace, who was sitting down, shot up and came towards me. No, don’t come over. I operated the pitching machine and tried lightly letting one ball fly.

-Keung

Peace’s gaze went toward the ball for a very short moment, and then he ignored it. Hey. When I was throwing it, you went after it really well.

I tried letting another one fly, but this time, he didn’t even look at it and came right to my feet and flopped on his back.

-Kkeureureung

“.....Peace.”

Could it be that having to directly train him meant this kind of meaning? My stamina, strength..... I swallowed a sigh and called the practice room maintenance.

"I need equipment that prioritizes the Stamina stat and includes the Strength stat. All of them, for each body part. Do I have to receive permission from Guild Leader directly?"

[No, you do not. He said to provide everything you need.]

"Then, I would like to request for integer increase ones."

At my words, the manager was little taken aback over the cell phone.

[We only have integer increase equipment that are low in rank.]

"I know."

Since that guy's guild only had people rich in stats. I still had to use the ones that were here, what else could I do.

Soon after, the requested equipment were sent over. I packed them on thickly and barely got to 100 in Stamina stat. It was about the level of an S-Rank level 2. Wow~.

Strength didn't quite reach 50, but Peace was still around the level of a C-Rank so it would probably be okay. And he would be level 1 since he didn't have combat experience.

“I already checked throwing balls, and this time, let’s try hitting the sandbag.”

I took Peace went to a sandbag that was hanging at one side. Of course, it wasn’t a normal sandbag. It was an extremely durable attack practice tool that automatically measured the damage.

“Okay, look, Peace. I’ll hold it for you so you just have to jump like this and hit it. You can scratch or bite it. It’s durable.”

When I gave a demonstration, Peace followed along by jumping around and piercing the sandbag with the horn on his head. He was pretty strong.

“Good, you’re doing well! That’s right! Just hit it any way!”

-Keureung, geureung!

When I shook the sandbag from time to time, he became even more excited and came at it. It felt good. I had a hunch that the training efficiency would be considerable. I finished exactly 30 minutes of training and then checked Peace’s remaining growth time.

“Oh, it decreased by over 1 hour!”

While training, the growth speed became about 2.3 times. If it was like this, then he would

probably become an adult by the time I apply the skill on him for the third time?

If we trained for 3 days without sleep, we could reduce 15 days to 7 days or less. But that was a little excessive, so if we comfortably grabbed 9 days, then it would take exactly two months.

“Good, let’s try something else too!”

-Kkiang!

Maybe because playing with the sandbag was fun, Peace jumped around excitedly. Our Peace, even his stamina was good.

Then, we tried training for five hours by using various equipment in succession. The most efficient one was 3-times-increasing mock combat and what saved me was 1.7-times-increasing moving a laser pointer.

“.....I’m going to die.”

-Kkeureureung?

Peace tilted his head, looking up at me, who was draped on a long chair.

I clearly had a higher Stamina stat but why wasn't he tired? Was his recovery fast because he was young? Or was this the difference between a C-Rank born to be an S-Rank and F-Rank pretending to have a high rank with equipment?

Awakened People's stats weren't just the five that were displayed. Awakened People researchers all said there should be stats hidden for all sorts of senses and such, like resilience, endurance, durability, intellect, or good fortune.

The proof were the results of an experiment that showed that there was a difference in ability even when stats were matched exactly with equipment and skills weren't used. Even if the stats were the same, the one who originally had the higher rank was superior in all facets.

So there was a limitation on relying on equipment. Sadly.

"Still, my current Stamina stat should be three times higher. Monsters' resilience seemed strong, so was it true?"

-Kkiang, kkiing!

"No. I can't play with you any longer. Let's rest a little."

It would be nice if I had a stamina potion, but there was still 1 year until it was created. It was because the dungeon that contained the ingredients for it appeared 1 year later. It would be great to take that dungeon too, but it was overseas.

‘It was Japan, right?’

Why there of all places? If Haeyeon quickly took its place, should we try attacking Japan? Killing two birds with one stone[2], that’s good.

-Geureureung, keureureung!

Begging to play, Peace eventually bit the hems of my pants and started to shake it. Hey, punk.

“Did a lot of things pile up since he was living cooped up inside the house all this time? Peace, do you want to play with those moles over there?”

We should experiment training with those too. Like wet cotton, they raised their heavy bodies and came towards us. The Tooth Moles bared their front teeth fiercely towards me. Things that were weaker than me even without the equipment were really being flippa-.

-Kyaaak!

Abruptly, Peace's fur stood on its end and he let out a furious sound.

"P-Peace?"

-Kyaang! Kyaaat!

-Kiiik!

When Peace rushed at them, the Tooth Moles yelled back from where they were between the pen door. Then, even the Moles in the other pens started to join in.

-Kiik, Kiii!

-Kiiik!

Geez, what kind of fuss was this. Even as a baby, as expected, a monster was a monster.

"Calm down for a bit. I'll take them out for you."

When I pressed the button on top of the pen, the door opened. Then.

-Kkiit!

The Tooth Moles were simply torn to pieces in the blink of an eye. Whoa. Our Peace... was pretty tough. Him rushing at me when we first met was at a cute level.

-Keuheung!

Peace hummed proudly with his blood-covered face. Then, as if telling me to see, he kicked over the remains of the Moles with his front paws and placed them at my feet.

"Right, right. You did well."

It seemed like I couldn't train him with monster matches. He finished them too quickly. And it was too dangerous to use monsters with higher ranks.

"Come here, let's clean your face."

-Gyareureureu, geureureung

That guy, seemed like he was in a good mood. That's right, quickly grow up and go to dungeons with Yoohyun and plow your way through to your heart's content.

[1] SO. Wayyy back in ch. 10 there was a word that tripped me up, and that was 유체, though I didn't make a footnote about it. But I asked my dad what it was and he was like it's 'liquid' and I was like well that makes no sense bc then it would be saying the HFL is a liq which it decidedly is not. So I checked the krn-eng dict again and it said it could also mean corporeal, and I was like aight that makes slightly more sense maybe there are incorporeal monsters too and the sys is differentiating that so I guess it's that. Fast forward several (many) ch to now, where I realize, hey wait 성체 means adult (from 성 = adult, 체 = body) and I'm p sure 유 = young, so I check up my hanja (bc a lot of words have corresponding hanja, as the krn alphabet was only made in the 15th c), and sure enough, 幼, I was right. I texted my dad like hey is this right and he's like yeah and I'm like well ok why didn't u tell me last time when we had like a 5 min discussion about this and he's like I only realized bc you put 유체 & 성체 together in ur text, so. Yeah. I haven't changed ch. 10 bc I'm too lazy to

[2] lit. 'eating the pheasant and eating the egg'

Chapter 38: < Dungeon+Water Mill >

< Dungeon+Water Mill >

Peace's training on the second day of skill application also went smoothly.

"2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies Horned Flame Lion juvenile. Currently, it is magic beast rearing skill application 2nd day, 4:39 pm. With the growth time required cut down through

training, he grew from body length 41cm, body weight 2.8kg to body length 51cm, body weight 5.6kg.”

Turning off the camcorder, I looked at Peace, who was sitting with his chest thrust out.

The guy who was about the size of a small cat, quickly grew in one day. If it stayed like this, after the 3 days of training was over, wouldn't he grow from the size of an extra-large cat to that of a large dog at maximum?

‘Soon, I should find a separate place for Peace to stay.’

I should be able to take him to my house up to this month, but starting from next month, it would probably be impossible. At the least, he would probably become the size of a tiger. I was already starting to feel sad.

‘I can't show the suddenly grown appearance either so the travel would have to be done secretly too.’

I would have to borrow a cage and move with a cloth covering it. It would be annoying going back and forth, so let's just spend the remaining two days here too. The theory training too, well, would I even need to get more of it?

I told Yoo Myeongwoo to rest for the two days while getting the training. Yerim said she would go straight into a dungeon after the class ended, so I wouldn't need to worry about

her.

She said this time, she got a proper team and was going to attack a C-Rank dungeon. They were Haeyeon Guild Hunters so they were people who went into B-Ranks and higher, so they would clear it within two to three days.

‘From now on, the guild would raise her nicely... It seems Yerim is out of my hands now.’

Later I should advise her about her skill and then I would have nothing else to help her with. It was refreshing and sad.

After organizing my thoughts, a yawn came out as if it was waiting. Hm, I’m sleepy. I had stayed up straight through the night, so my eyelids were heavy.

“Peace, aren’t you sleepy? Let’s take a nap for a bit.”

I held the Peace who came bounding over, and went toward the lounge. I should sleep just one hour.

While I was sleeping, Yoo Myeongwoo had come over and given the food he packed for me. That guy’s food was still tasty. It was to the extent that he could sell it.

Right after that, Yerim had come over to see me before going into the dungeon, and now it

was night.

“Wahhhh, I lost! Waa!”

The Dokkaebi was sitting flopped down on the floor and wailed.

This time, they must have thoroughly prepared, because it felt like watching a horror movie in realistic 4D. Even so, it ended with the Fear Resistance skill popping up ‘coercion nullification’.

It seemed like the Fear Resistance skill’s message window only popped up when you felt an above average overwhelming feeling. It seemed like it only gave a calming effect normally, and the message window only popped up when it was 100% nullification.

Then again, if overwhelming feelings, dread, uneasiness, etc. were completely nullified in everyday life, you wouldn’t be able to feel normal emotions. Since emotions were interdependent.

“I can’t go home! I won’t go!”

Shrieking, they actually lied down and threw a tantrum. Rather than being upset over losing the bet, it seemed more like they were scared of being scolded. Were they really a kid? If that was an act, it was worthy of an entertainment grand award.

I placed Peace, who had become heavier than yesterday, on my lap, and watched that spectacle before suddenly asking.

“Dokkaebi, just how old are you?”

“Age? I haven’t counted after passing one hundred years.”

...Hundred years? Not ten years? Were they joking?

“If you don’t want to reveal it, just tell me if you’re a minor or not.”

“Good! The bet was a bet, so you have the qualification to hear! Even if I get scolded I’ll tell you!”

The Dokkaebi floated up in place. At some point, what they were wearing on their face was changed to a widely smiling Hahoe Mask. Was it a Yangban Mask[1]? It was a long time since I learned it so I couldn’t remember well.

“Does Boss[2] think there are dokkaebi?”

“...What?”

So.

“.....You wouldn’t be talking about real dokkaebi, right?”

“Of course real ones, would I mean fake ones?”

What nonsense.

“There aren’t things like dokkaebi in the world.”

The Dokkaebi was turning around in the air.

“Even though there are dungeons and Awakened People? Boss’ dongsaeng controls fire and Boss’ guarder sprays ice fog!”

“That, that’s... the system...”

“The system what?”

The system, um.

Thinking about it, dokkaebi and ghosts being real seemed more realistic than dungeons suddenly popping up and Awakened People appearing.

Things like dokkaebi at least had stories that were conveyed down, but the system was out of the blue.

Still, saying that there were dokkaebi was a little, absurd.

“...But you’re an Awakened Person.”

It was weird, but they definitely had a name too.

The Dokkaebi laughed. It was a laugh like a soap bubble floating around.

“Boss Mr. Kim[3], my age is over a hundred, my age is three!”

Three years old. Three years.

When dungeons, Awakened People first appeared was exactly three years ago. They were born with the system. One guess suddenly popped into my mind.

“.....Were they mixed with the dungeon’s energy?”

At my mumbling, the Dokkaebi pricked their ears.

“You know? How? You know? Really?”

Of course it wasn’t the present’s knowledge. And me too, I didn’t know that well either.

The mixing phenomenon appeared rarely, and after frequent dungeon breaks, so even 5 years later, it couldn’t be properly investigated into.

But why already... No, if it was three years ago, it was when the first dungeons burst open in a row. They were low rank dungeons, so the energy that leaked out was weak, but it was a circumstance where one or two somethings that were mixed with it could appear.

“So in the end, you mean that you’re not a real dokkaebi.”

At my words, the Dokkaebi grinned.

“I really am a dokkaebi though?!”

“Right, right. Yoon-ssi’s household must be something like an old water mill.”

Since they’re Yoon Yoon. Wouldn’t the first one be the surname and the last one the wheel ‘yoon’[4] character? If not a water mill, then a wheelbarrow. Or, exactly like it says, they could be a wheel.

“H-how did you know?!”

The Dokkaebi froze in midair. They seemed incredibly shocked.

“Is Boss maybe, a shaman’s golden bell or something...”

“I’m one hundred percent pure human.”

If a shaman’s golden bell was mixed with the dungeons’ energy and became an Awakened Person, would they get something like a prophecy ability? ...It was a little captivating. Though there was no method to artificially make things like dokkaebi.

“Do you happen to know anything about the system? A memory or information could have been mixed in.”

“No, I don’t know?”

As expected, they didn't.

Anyways, I understood the Dokkaebi's unusual personality and unique special skills. As expected, it seemed like you couldn't earn a scam-like skill like teleportation with a normal aptitude.

'Dungeon energy could be said to be a gate that connects to a different world and a space that contains that world, so it makes sense that that kind of special skill could be earned.'

So that was why there wasn't anything related to teleportation in the optimized skills. Floating around and hiding were the self-styled dokkaebi-like optimized skills.

'What exactly were these dungeons?'

Why did they make things like that and scatter them around this world, and how come they made it so we attack those dungeons through the Awakened People system?

Before the regression, I hadn't thought deeply about it.

But now, I couldn't just pass it over like that. Above all, the system approached me first.

‘Looks like I really do have to go into a dungeon.’

I couldn’t continue to pretend not to know and avoid it. Now I even had the Dokkaebi, so I could go safely.

“Can you use teleportation in dungeons too?”

“Hm?”

“To outside the dungeon, I mean. Or applying hiding to me too so that I can avoid monsters is okay too. To what rank of dungeons have you gone in?”

“I haven’t gone into any.”

What?

“You haven’t gone into a dungeon before? Not even once?”

“Yeah. Can’t go in. I can’t, I mean.”

This was something new.

“I tried going in, but there was a resistance? With a bang, I was thrown out!”

“Resistance? Was it because you had dungeon energy?”

Did it mean that you couldn’t put a dungeon inside a dungeon? If you treated them as something similar to a type of dungeon...

“What, why are you looking at me like that? It’s shady!”

“It’s a gaze that means that you’re so valuable and precious.”

“Well that’s true, but!”

Let’s somehow investigate this. The problem was that there was no method to.

Wait, if they were similar to a dungeon.

I lowered Peace from my lap and stood from my seat. Then, I spread both my arms toward the Dokkaebi.

“Dokkaebi.”

“Yeah?”

“Let’s hug once.”

Just in case, to see if the person who made the dungeon would contact through the analogous dungeon.

“Huh? Why?! No!”

The Dokkaebi, who I thought would just come over without thinking and hug, shook their head and shot up in the air. Strangely, it was an oversensitive reaction. Even though they embraced Suk Hayan.

“There’s something I need to check. I don’t have evil intentions toward someone whose species isn’t even clear.”

“Still no! I promised I wouldn’t wrestle!”

Wrestle? Before scaring people, did they go around wrestling? They were really a dokkaebi

faithful to dokkaebi.

“Then come around me and hug me from behind.”

“...I have to hug you?”

“It’s important.”

“But if I hug you, I’ll want to hook your legs and throw you.”

“Just put up with it for a bit.”

After hesitating, the Dokkaebi went behind me. Then they pulled me into their arms from behind.

“Good enough?”

“Wait.”

I quickly checked the Status Window but there was no change.

“Try teleporting over there while holding me.”

“You’re already starting to work me hard.”

What, I hadn’t even started yet. Complaining, the Dokkaebi took me and teleported. It was definitely a similar feeling to going through a dungeon gate. It was different from a mini portal.

When I opened the Status Window, I saw a different part.

[Drageon Slayer(L)←]

This time, it was a simple arrow. Did they not have time to use an emoticon? Continuing,

[Poison Resistance(L)←]

And,

[Poison Resistance(L) – Complete immunity to poisons less than Legendary Grade

Definitely detoxifies you.

From poisons that are harmful to the human body.

Finally medicine also detoxif]

This time also had an explanation attached. But what was this.

Checking done[5]?

...They checked by themselves and then checking done? In the end, were you telling me to come and go from a dungeon just to check? Or because the time was too insufficient? Seeing how they couldn't finish the last part, it seemed like they wrote really quickly.

"Good enough right? I'm letting you go? I can't put up with it any longer!"

"Wait. One more time, no several more times, teleport."

"Don't want to! It's hard teleporting with someone! The distance decreases and I can't do it in succession!"

The Dokkaebi got far away from me and yelled. It looked like they could teleport several

times by themselves, but it seemed like it was hard with another person.

“You can’t make portals yet?”

“Portals?”

As expected, they didn’t have it yet. It was three to four years later when they got the ultra-long-distance portal skill. They couldn’t even go into dungeons so their growth could only be slow. To level up outside, you had to buy monsters and hunt them or aim for a dungeon break.

It couldn’t be helped, I had to apply the keyword to them and raise them.

“Dokkaebi.”

“Yeah?”

“My subordinate-nim who I love, take care of me from now on.”

Carrying agape for all people, I will do a love ballad[6]. Diligently, steadily, every time I see you, I love you[7].

Then, the Dokkaebi let out a shriek and ran away. Why?

“Here is the camcorder that has the growth record documented.”

I handed over the camcorder to Suk Simyeong, who couldn't hide his lips quirking up. Yoohyun was gone, preparing for the dungeon attack, so Suk Simyeong took the record instead and checked it.

“I am so sincerely in awe that I feel deeply moved, Han Yoojin-ssi.”

Suk Simyeong said in a voice that was soft and sticky like a rich chocolate drink. His voice really was good. I was jealous. Like he could date and then even marry someone he completely didn't know, just through over the phone.

“It is to the extent that I would like to lower my head and apologize for not being a good judge of character. I should have stamped a contract with you earlier, 3 years ago.”

Saying so, his gaze seemed like he wanted to grab my fingers and pull me over at least now. No, I said I wouldn't contract.

“You might have heard from Yoohyun, but I am thinking of staying unaffiliated for some time.”

“Yes. He told me that you will contract once Haeyeon has become the best in the country.
Could I confirm this one more time?”

“That’s...”

I was about to speak when I stopped and closed my mouth. Something was kind of icky.

“.....Are you recording this?”

“Oh dear, you are not an ordinary person, as expected.”

Suk Simyeong laughed ‘hahaha’ and didn’t turn off the recorder. He was trying to stealthily move past it.

“You should turn it off?”

“Isn’t the recording necessary for adjusting the contract details?”

Despite saying that, Suk Simyeong obediently turned the recorder off.

“There’s nothing else, right?”

“For Han Yoojin-ssi’s trust, at least, there is not.”

Then don’t record in the first place. Anyways, this ahjussi definitely was a snake with jet-black scales in a past life.

“The negotiations about familiars with the 3 big guilds are planned to take place at a place provided by the Hunter Association. I will also likely accompany you but the main spokesperson[8] will be Guild Leader. Still, you will not need to worry. I have taught him well.”

No, the fact that you taught him was more worrying. Don’t infect my kind Yoohyun, snake.

“It is a new dungeon attack with no information, but as Guild Leader will participate, it will not take long. If it is indeed a slime dungeon, the attack will end within three days.”

Slimes’ weak point was fire. Though if you burned them, you couldn’t use them as materials, but a new dungeon attack prioritized safety and gathering information over materials supply and demand so they would quickly attack.

“If the negotiations safely come to a conclusion, why don’t you make an appearance in a broadcast?”

“.....Excuse me?”

Make an appearance where?

[1] type of hahoe (pronounced more like hah-hweh tbh) mask (masks worn during the hahoe byeolsingut talnori). Each hahoe mask represents a stock character and ‘yangban’ means ‘noble, aristocrat’

[2] actually, it’s more like ‘leader, commander’ but they’re boss & subordinate now and anyways these words all means similar things so I’ll be using ‘boss’

[3] ok so I was confused abt this part but my dad thought they might be just calling yj ‘mr. kim’ for laughs? Like calling him ‘john doe’ or sth like that? But later I looked up dokkaebi on wikipedia on a whim and apparently most dokkaebi have the surname ‘kim’ in folktales, so it might be related to that. On a particular note, the ‘mr.’ used here is specifically suhbang/seobang, which nowadays is only used to call & refer to your son-in-law or brother-in-law by adding it to their surname (or by itself for a wife to refer to her husband in a casual way, which isn’t the usage here bc it’s placed after ‘kim’). The krn dict also said ‘used to refer to people without government positions’ which is bc, according to my dad, historically, most noblemen had govt jobs and thus titles they could be called by and so the few who didn’t needed sth to be called by. Also, to give some context to what’s being implied throughout the ch, wikipedia also said dokkaebi are formed from spiritual possession of inanimate objects. Up to u if u believe wiki. The surname Kim thing didn’t have a reference footnote, though the inanimate object thing did, to an encyclopedia in eng. But my one (1) direct krn source (aka my dad) was like ‘idk’ to both things, so... For what it’s worth, both things are also written in the krn wiki, though neither of them had a reference

footnote.

[4] he is talking about hanja 윤/륜(輪). He also actually says 'wheel ryoon character' but that's because it was originally pronounced 'ryoon' but it is also pronounced 'yoon', depending. I might be wrong, but I'm sure that words that originally/historically started with the 'r' sound tend to lose it and start with 'y' or a vowel, though sometimes it's retained and they switch based on spelling rules.

[5] vertical wordplay again, from the 3 lines of explanation

[6] well, a traditional Korean ballad

[7] not really relevant but he said this in English transliterated to Korean Imao

[8] actually, he just says 'main' in English transliterated to Korean so I'm just guessing with 'spokesperson'

Chapter 39: < It's a Scam >

< It's a Scam >

"Suddenly why... a broadcast?"

It was really out of the blue. But the snake across the table didn't seem to think so.

"What I mean is that we should make your face certainly known."

"...Wouldn't the opposite of that be better for my personal protection?"

"No. At any rate, once the negotiations are over, not even one day will pass before information about Yoojin-ssi will spread across the world. There will be no use trying to hide you."

I was expecting that, but hearing so from others, I felt worried anew. Various crimes where Awakened People with low stats and useful special skills were the targets flashed through my mind in a row.

How much would my worth be?

"So, it is safer to make it so that many people will be able to recognize you. It is far more difficult to approach someone who everyone is paying attention to, rather than the opposite."

It was indeed true. If I came out on TV or something and received a lot of interest, the amount of watching eyes would that much increase.

“Even if you happen to be abducted, the possibility of being contacted by a witness would be higher as well. ‘Why is a Haeyeon Guild member in such a strange place with people from other guilds’ and such.”

“I’m not a guild member but an employee. A normal employee.”

He was sneakily trying to treat me like a guild member.

“Hahaha, Yoojin-ssi feels so close that you really do seem like a guild member. Isn’t there a sense of distance with a normal employee?”

“You musn’t discriminate.”

“You are correct. Whether you are a guild member or a normal employee, we are all one family. Han Yoojin-ssi is also our family.”

“...But please make a distinction.”

As expected, dealing with this ahjussi was tiring.

“It would the first time for a cute looking monster to appear in a broadcast, so it would be

easy to draw in interest. Moreover, you mentioned Peace is quite charmingly cute?”

“He’s good and cute and lovely.”

Now he had also gotten quite cool. He didn’t look like an adult yet but his mane became more abundant and his tail also got longer. And his horn shone gold.

Whoever’s house’s kid he was[1], he was quite good looking.

When I unconsciously smiled, pleased, Suk Simyeong followed suit and smiled, pleased. Why were you smiling? And while looking at me, at that.

“Because of confidentiality, I can only start after the negotiations are over, but I will thoroughly draw up a schedule ahead of time. Please believe in and leave it to me.”

“Department Head Suk’s capability for handling matters is trustable. I will be relaxed and wait.”

Of course, I only trusted his ability to handle matters.

At my words, the snake put on an expression like he was thinking of a golden calf[2] that was carefully left in a main room vault. I very much wasn’t curious about what kind of thoughts he was having.

"If there is something you want to know or something you need, please contact me any time."

"Haha, yes."

I would probably have to be involved with Suk Simyeong frequently for a while. It was better than when I was being flayed by his tongue so let's try getting along.

"Our Peace, were you being good and well-behaved?"

-Geureureung

Peace, who was lying down on my bed, jumped over and purred. The pen was getting cramped and I was hiding the magic beast rearing skill from Yoo Myeongwoo, so Peace moved his sleeping place to my bedroom, the largest room in the house.

The bed was covered with fur. It was a relief that I didn't have an allergy.

"Soon, you'll be able to go around freely, so just put up with it a little longer."

I said, picking up Peace. Compared to the beginning, he had become more than three times heavier so my two arms were weighted down. Peace's growth gradually got slower so on the third day, he increased by 0.5kg at most and stopped. There was a clear difference compared to the 2.8kg increase on the first day and 3.1kg increase on the second day.

The rank also was still listed as C. He definitely got much stronger, so if he was at the level of a low-grade C-Rank dungeon monster at first, now he was probably at the level of a high-grade C-Rank dungeon monster.

'Since it's 'transformation into adult', does that mean that after growing up a certain amount, he wouldn't grow up for a while until the conditions are met, and then grow in one stroke?'

The time required for growth had decreased steadily with the training. If it was like this, then it wouldn't be long before he became an adult.

After playing a little with Peace and feeding him, I went back out. Now I should take care of Myeongwoo too. Why did I have so much to do?

I took the various bladed tools that Myeongwoo had already bought, and went toward the Haeyeon Guild's equipment management department[3]. If it was in a big guild, it was a place that maintained various items, through divisions prepared for each one.

"It's possible to repair dungeon items in a normal way if the damage rate is below a fixed amount. Of course, the materials have to be dungeon by-products."

Riding the elevator and going down, I explained to Myeongwoo.

“So there’ll be ordinary repair tools too. While we’re at it, it would be good to become friendly with the management department people. Since it’s highly likely you’ll be working there when you get the related skill.”

He wouldn’t simply work there, and it was a sure thing that he would become something like the department head. Or they might make a completely new division. Even so, he would need assistance from those with related skills, so there was nothing bad about getting to know them ahead of time.

“If it went like that, then it would be really great. Truthfully, I don’t want to do any dungeon attacks.”

“Alright. You can just go into dungeons intermittently to occasionally level up.”

Would I be so crazy as to make the SS-Rank blacksmith-nim do something dangerous? If something went wrong while he was in a dungeon, it would be damage to the entire world. I should safely see him off on a bus or something.[4]

You could only get to the equipment management department through another security check. When we passed a normal office with things like desks and chairs and computers and opened a thick door, hot air flowed out.

So that over there, past the barrier, was a mana line, huh. It was a tool with a small furnace that boiled mana stones that looked similar but were refined, and melted all sorts of dungeon metals. For item repair, it was an essential equipment.

“Who’s the newbie with the Whetstone skill between the two of you?”

A middle-aged person with a good build and wearing protective gear came towards us and asked, while throwing one each of blue towel-like things towards us. Taking and holding it, it became cool. Other people around were also wearing these blue towels around their necks or tied around their hips.

“This seems quite useful.”

“It takes magic stones to maintain.”

Which meant they were expensive. This was why it was hard for things that were developed with dungeon by-products to become widespread. It would be impossible before magic stones become inexpensive.

“You may have heard but we need a machine for sharpening bladed tools.”

There wasn’t anything about having to nicely put down a whetstone and sincerely

sharpening one at a time. Just in case, we should at least test it out.

I turned on the My Brat skill window and opened the skill growth target Yoo Myeongwoo's status window.

[Sharpening the blade of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 71/10,000)]

While I was training Peace, Yoo Myeongwoo also diligently sharpened knives in the kitchen. According to Myeongwoo, Whetstone's sharpening buff was applied while he was sharpening knives even if he didn't use the skill.

'If he sharpens blades enough that the skill is applied automatically, it probably means that the value of one is recognized, right?'

It was good that it was easy to check. And he could sharpen again knives that had the skill effect wear off. Whetstone's duration time was 3 hours, so it meant that he didn't actually need ten thousand bladed tools. Even the number of bladed tools Myeongwoo sharpened for three days was only thirteen.

"This is called a special grinder. It easily sharpens even dungeon metals."

The middle-aged man thumped the firmly fixed machine and said.

Speaking of, were all the people here owners of equipment-related special skills? If so, there were too many of them. I was curious so I started off by checking the status window of the man in front of me.

[Awakened Person – Lee Minsuk

Current stat rank C

Possible Awakening stat rank D~C

Optimized Initial Skills

Delicate Soldering(B) Acquired

Pounding(C) Acquisition failure

Stamina Up(D) Acquired]

It was Delicate Soldering. Just looking at it, you could know it was a repair-related skill. For Pounding, just looking at its name, its classification was ambiguous but it was an acquisition failure. If it was a C-Rank special skill, it was a waste, but I didn't need to be concerned over

an ahjussi who was living well.

Then, I looked at the other people. Besides Lee Minsuk, the remaining seven were all Awakened People. But, among them, four were stat E-Rank and higher but with common F-Rank skills. Of course, they could have gotten skills other than optimized ones, and a good skill could have come with 10 levels, so I couldn't tell if they just had only F-Rank skills.

Anyways, all of them weren't at the level of ordinary people for stats at least. Was it so because it was a job that required strength?

"Yoojin?"

Since I was just looking around at the surroundings, Yoo Myeongwoo hit my arm.

"I was just looking around. Take out a knife, let's try sharpening. How do you use this?"

"There's a clamp over there, right? After firmly fastening it, press the button."

"You don't sharpen by holding it in your hand?"

"You said you were stat F? Like that, there'll be an accident."

Since it was special grinder, it seemed like it wasn't made for normal people to use. If the machine did everything, I didn't think it would be recognized.

Just in case, I told Yoo Myeongwoo to try fastening the knife. With a loud noise, the machine sharpened the blade, but even when the powerful machine's strength went past sharpening the knife and ruined it, there was no change to the progress amount. As expected, it didn't work.

"Besides this, are there no normal machines?"

"Normal ones? If you go to the workroom over there, there should be one. You can adjust the strength by putting pressure with your feet, so it's good for delicate work."

That was perfect.

"Thank you."

Together with Yoo Myeongwoo, I went into the workroom. In the middle of the miscellaneous tools spread around, I saw a much simpler looking grinder machine. It would be great if it was a success this time.

Myeongwoo sat on the chair placed in front of the grinder. He turned on the machine and took out a kitchen knife and placed his foot on the pedal.

Shortly, the grinders started turning.

Myeongwoo hesitated a bit, before holding out the knife blade. An ear-piercing noise was heard for a short while and stopped, and then repeating so. The hands that seemed very much like a novice gradually started to become more skilled.

Shortly after,

[Sharpening the blade of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 72/10,000)]

“Good!”

It was a success. Hooray modern convenience.

“That’s good. With this, you’ll probably finish soon.”

“Yeah! Once I get used to it, I’ll be able to sharpen more than a hundred each day!”

How many minutes did it take just now? It didn’t seem to take long.

Myeongwoo, who was worked up for a brief moment, took out another knife. The expression of the posed guy was calm, unlike usual. So he could make that kind of face too.

Then, another knife blade was sharpened. This time, it was even faster. And there was no hesitation unlike the first time.

Clang

The sharpened knife fell on the opposite side of the chair and new knife was held in his hand. The knife blade that was dull because it was bought in a heap from a junk shop, started to shine.

Was just sharpening it enough to make it look like that? Or was it because of the skill?

While I was thinking about something else for a short moment, the fourth knife started to make noises. The hands that were sharpening the knife while slightly tilting the direction were completely skilled. Even to a layperson's eyes, like mine, they were efficient movements that didn't do too much or too less.

He seemed like a boss who had been sharpening knives for ten years or so.

‘.....It's a scam.’

How was he like that? Just how much time had passed since we came in that he was like this.

‘Just why exactly did he move from office job to office job?’

He should have gone for a technical job. So what if he failed at a liberal arts college? If he had wisely chosen a career, he wouldn’t have had cause to meet me, and it would have been smooth sailing for him.

While I was sighing over it to myself, I looked at him sharpening knives. Even though it was repetitive motions of simple work, my eyes didn’t easily leave it.

Light was brought back to the knife while there was a smooth rhythm that was flowing like water, precise and without a single thing out of place like a machine, and now even had a sound that was also smooth.

Whenever he wetted it with cooling water and the water droplets scattered, it mixed with the sparkling of the knife blade and even felt artistic.

How should I say it, I realized that knife sharpening could also look cool. It was impressive. It was definitely a scam.

Clang

Along with the sound of the knife falling, the machine stopped. Yoo Myeongwoo lowered his hands and turned to look at me.

“You’re still here?”

“Yeah, just happened to.”

Wait, did he sharpen them all already? Even though we bought so many?

[Sharpening the blade of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 115/10,000)]

...He sharpened over forty, but how much time had passed? I didn’t measure it, but it felt like it was within one hour. It could have been even faster than that. Even if you said that you could decrease the time with the machine, I had thought that it would take about 4-5 minutes for each one.

It wasn’t like he sharpened them crudely; all of the piled bladed tools were sparkling like new. It could have been because the skill was applied, but in the first place, not using the skill and getting it to act wouldn’t be a normal thing.

“You... if it’s this pace, wouldn’t you finish in ten days?”

“You’re right. The machine is great.”

That guy Myeongwoo said as if nothing was wrong. Scary guy. You were pretending like you were normal but it seems like you really did have the aptitude for an SS-Rank skill.

“Knives... It would be good to buy about three hundred more, right?”

“Yeah. Since there’s still a lot of time for the skill’s duration time to finish. Sorry.”

“No, it’s fine. Completely fine. Don’t worry.”

However much it is, I will make an investment. By all means.

[1] this is a common teasing/joking phrase you use for a kid you know well, for things like praising them, so obviously he doesn’t mean it literally. There’s really no good tl for it so I just left it as is literally

[2] back in the olden days, ppl stored gold as gold calves (instead of bars), so you can infer that he’s thinking of sth valuable stored away

[3] it’s actually ‘team’ (the eng word transliterated) but they also talk about it like it’s a place,

so I thought it would make more sense to use 'department' instead esp since I've been tl-ing 팀장 as 'department head' anyways

[4] just means send him away safely and politely, since the courteous thing to do when you say goodbye to someone is to see them off safely, and often that means making sure they get on their bus back (if they live far away).

Chapter 40: < I am the landlord >

< I am the landlord >

It was relaxing. The sound of rain hitting the glass windows was heartwarming.

Lying down on the sofa and listening to the purring of Peace, who was stuck right to my side, both the inside and outside of my stretched-out body became soft.

As expected, being free with nothing I needed to do was the best.

Both Yoohyun and Yerim had gone into dungeons. Kim Sunghan was also participating in the new A-Rank dungeon attack. I was wondering how I should use my skill on him, when I decided to start by growing his stats first. Since it would be a waste to miss the initial experience points for the new dungeon. Just in case, I tried using it focused on stat growth, and it worked.

Myeongwoo's ten thousand knives sharpening was also going smoothly. Although there was an instance where he sharpened a thousand in one day and then unfortunately wasn't able to even get out of bed the next day. Now, he had compromised by doing about four to five hundred a day.

The Dokkaebi didn't appear again after that day. Even if you said they had an ambiguous identity, they were receiving other people's requests, so it wouldn't be hard to get their contact information. But I didn't have any intention of purposely tracking them down right now.

'When would I be able to loll around like this again?'

From now on, I would get busy so I should rest when I could. Though this would also end right away.

It had already been three days since Yoohyun started the dungeon attack. If nothing big happened, he would come out around today or tomorrow.

Ahh, I wanted to relax more.

I wanted to relax my entire life.

I wanted to become Extra[1] 1 that didn't have to do anything.

‘Even before the regression, I lived diligently, so why do I have to live diligently again?’

I suffered a lot with my young dongsaeng and then suffered a lot again when the world changed. At least I wasn’t suffering anymore, so maybe that was a relief.

“Anyways, should I eat?”

Normally, I had just irregularly filled my stomach with whatever, but lately I was regularly taking care of three meals. Since the food was tasty.

I went to the kitchen and opened the fridge door. I saw the containers of side dishes that were neatly stacked.

That green onion kimchi was really good. I hadn’t known spicy and piquant green onion kimchi on top of white rice could taste so good. I had thought that meat needed to be added for grass to be worth eating.

Of course the meat sides were obviously delicious. The soy sauce braised beef with shishito peppers was the best. The braised short ribs that softly melted on your tongue was also impressive. The sausage fry was past surprising and was to the point of being fascinating. It outwardly looked similar to the ones from school lunches, but it was impossible to compare the taste.

'I'm already starting to get depressed thinking of that guy Myeongwoo leaving the house.'

How did the cooking capabilities of that guy who had said he could boil ramen at least, progress this much? It was definitely a scam. Now that I knew him, wasn't that guy Myeongwoo the most OP[2]?

I heated the soft tofu stew that suspiciously might have drugs in it and set the table, and then when I took a bite, it felt like I would start crying.

I guess he wouldn't live off me even after he gets the SS-Rank skill. Definitely. Even three days ago, it wasn't to this extent. If his capabilities grow even more like this, really, fuck, what should I do? Should I cut him off at least now? Should I tell him to stop cooking? This must be why they said if you're pretty, 3 months, if you cook well, the rest of your life.

"It's sad... Could I get some side dishes from him from time to time?"

I cleared the table and fed Peace. Even though he got bigger, the amount of food he ate didn't have a big difference. He still ate two magic stones and just the amount of meat increased a bit.

-Kkeueung, kkeueung

After eating, Peace turned his head toward the entrance and whined. He was impatient over not being allowed out starting from the day after the training ended. It seemed like he was

bored from being confined after playing all day to his heart's content.

"Sorry, sorry. After just the negotiations are over, I'll take you to the training room and play with you every day."

-Kkeureureu

I tried to soothe him but Peace turned his body around and sat himself down in front of the entrance's inner door. The tip of his tail frustratedly slapped the floor.

"Our Peace, are you sulking?"

-Kkooooooo

"You must be angry because you can't go out. Sorry."

-Kkieueung

"Let's put up with it a little, okay? Uncle Yoohyun will come out soon."

-Kkiiing, kkeuoong

Even while readily replying, he didn't turn back to look at me. He was firmly in a sulk.

"Then should we play with a ball?"

At the words, 'play with a ball', the tapping tail stopped. The drooping ears perked up and he tilted his head towards me.

"But you can't get too excited and break the TV like last time. You have to play carefully."

-Kkiang!

Peace replied confidently while bounding over. Though I didn't know if he meant he really was going to be careful or if he was just excited. Eh, if it broke I could just buy another one. There was still a lot money left over from selling the magic stones.

Like that, it was when Peace had broken the sofa instead of the TV.

Briiing

The doorbell rang. Did Myeongwoo come back already? It was too fast.

“Who is it?”

[It is Suk Simyeong!]

I heard the reply from over the intercom. Why was this ahjussi coming all the way here? And his voice somehow seemed to have lost its composure.

“Peace, just wait a minute.”

So that Peace wouldn’t run out, I checked to make sure the inner door[3] was closed before opening the entrance door. I saw Suk Simyeong’s face, which was completely rid of his usual composure and was past excited to being flushed. What, what was going on?

“All the way to here, why did you-.”

“Han Yoojin-ssi!”

Suk Simyeong, who had come through the entrance and slammed the door shut, said. Then he suddenly pulled me over and hugged me. Was he Myeongwoo wearing a mask of Suk Simyeong?!

"It is slime!"

"Sorry? Whoa!"

Suk Simyeong lifted me up like he was going to toss me up into the air. Fuck, wait. Calm down.

"Wait just, ack, don't shake me! Don't turn around either!"

Was he crazy, really!

"My goodness! Where could a treasure like this come from!"

Suk Simyeong didn't listen to me at all and laughed loudly. Fuck, let me down. Are you going to make it obvious that you're stat B-Rank! The F-Rank is going to die of sadness!

It was when I couldn't escape from Suk Simyeong's rough grasp and was only cursing.

Bam!

-Kyaaang!

The closed inner door shook hard and a fierce howl was heard.

“That right now-.”

“Let me go right now! Peace, it’s okay!”

The kid was alarmed because you were acting so loud! Suk Simyeong lowered me down, taken aback. As soon as I opened the inner door, Peace, with his fur bristling up, jumped forward and wrapped his front paws around one of my legs. Then he fiercely bared his canines at Suk Simyeong.

-Keureureureu

“It’s okay, Peace! Calm down!”

I quickly held Peace and petted the puffed-up mane.

-Keuheung, geureureung

“Right, right. It’s okay. He’s not a bad person.”

Though he wasn't a good person either. He was sort of on our side but gray.

"I had heard about it, but he really does listen well to Yoojin-ssi."

Suk Simyeong looked at me and Peace with eyes filled with awe. Did he finally calm down a little?

"So, you mean that the new A-Rank dungeon was a slime dungeon?"

"Yes. Han Yoojin-ssi's prediction was correct."

Madness started to whirl around in this ahjussi's eyes again. Calm down, calm down. Relax.

"We shouldn't do this here – let's go inside first."

I should pou- no, make him drink some cold water.

"It seems like the attack has ended?"

I asked, taking out and giving ice water to Suk Simyeong, who was sitting at the dining

table. The fridge in my house even had a water purifier. Though I had only used old ones with just one door flap before.

“Yes, I received contact just a while ago.”

Suk Simyeong said, after drinking the water in one gulp. Stuck right next to my side, Peace warily glared at him. Maybe he didn’t like him at all, because he would occasionally wrinkle his nose and growl.

“I heard that it really was a slime dungeon.”

It would’ve been. As long as the future didn’t change.

“Really, a slime...”

“Please drink some more water.”

And don’t get excited. This time, Suk Simyeong gulped down about half the glass. Then he spoke.

“What do you think about moving to a place that has a little better security?”

“Excuse me?”

“This place is managed with A-Rank Hunters in mind, so the crime prevention facilities are lacking. And there is a surveillance camera only at the entrance. Also, it would be better if a tracker-.”

“I refuse.”

It was enough having just one, that dongsaeng guy, obsess over my safety. I completely didn't have the patience to listen to someone else's nonsense.

“But-.”

“But nothing, I don't want to.”

Was he Han Yoohyun wearing a mask of Suk Simyeong? It was that guy's 'but' again. At my resolute words, Suk Simyeong wrinkled his forehead.

“It seems that Han Yoojin-ssi does not know his own value.”

“I know roughly.”

My value, you say. Before my regression, I probably would have been rolling pebble number 5,912.

“Raising high rank familiars, and predicting dungeons, indeed are abilities that would bring about an incredibly large impact.”

“It is not at the level of being incredibly large. Especially in the latter case, it wouldn’t be at the level of guilds, but the entire country could put itself forward.”

Was that what the American guys were thinking? Well, it was information that you could use to manipulate the world, if you could grasp it. But.

“Predictions about dungeons are still uncertain. It isn’t that an exact rule was discovered; it is a hypothesis that relies about half on luck.”

Not only did I not actually calculate it out, I wouldn’t be able to remember anyways if it wasn’t a famous place like this slime dungeon this time. It wasn’t like there were only one or two dungeons – how would I remember all of them?

“In the end, the only skill I actually have is the magic beast trainer skill. So, as long as the negotiations end well, there is no need for excessive protection.”

Even with just raising the familiars, my worth would be full and overflowing with enough left over, but compared to the rules of dungeon formation, it was weak. You could take valuable

dungeons before others, and raise the stability of new dungeon attacks, and stop undiscovered dungeon breaks.

Above all, if you had that information in your hands, in one stroke, all guilds would lie at your feet and you could stand high up alone. If it was several years later when the rate and number of high rank dungeons increased, you could be able to shake entire nations.

“Even if you say it is still a hypothesis, isn’t it possible for it to become a rule someday?”

“Of course that is so, but it is truthfully beyond my capabilities. I haven’t properly studied those kinds of things. Instead, there is Suk Hayan-ssi.”

“Are you speaking of the field of statistics?”

It was nice that I didn’t need to explain at length. I nodded my head.

“If I leave the research to Suk Hayan-ssi, it won’t be long until they become rules. It would be even better to find several more researchers who are trustable.”

Let’s dump this on Suk Simyeong too. I didn’t have the ability to track down, not even Awakened People, but normal scholars.

“Give support at a guild level, is that what you are saying?”

“That would be good. Thanks to the slime dungeon, wouldn’t funds not be lacking to a reasonable extent? While you’re at it, why don’t you make a research facility on, of course dungeons, but also including Awakened People? In addition, I have agreed to supply the data regarding dungeons.”

“Supply the data.”

Suk Simyeong was about to say something before stopping and closing his mouth. I really was quite suspicious. Still, what was he going to do about it? I was the guild leader’s older brother and brought over an S-Rank, and now even I myself was a useful special skill holder. You should let a few suspicious points slide.

“I will try to favorably consider the matter of a research facility.”

“Instead of considering, why don’t you just decide? Acquiring things first is the best. You have to quickly start to quickly get the outcomes.”

Even if you started now, it would take years. At my words, Suk Simyeong nodded his head.

“If we extort a facility from the giant guilds through the matter of familiars, then we will

include it there.”

“Sorry? Exort what?”

“Won’t it be impossible for you to raise monsters here? It wouldn’t be just one or two. We were going to push away the building nextdoor and build a new one. Of course, we wouldn’t use our own money.”

The snake said, smiling slyly. There would be several monsters I’d have to look after in the future, so it definitely would be hard to care for them here, but I had thought they would build something in the outskirts or something. His generosity sure was large. And with others’ money at that.

“Is that okay? If we incur a backlash in vain...”

“Of course, the landlord will be Han Yoojin-ssi.”

“It is okay, completely okay.”

I mean, what jackpot was this? To think that I would get an extra benefit that I hadn’t expected. It was to the extent of seeing Suk Simyeong as not a red-banded snake, but a mottled snake.[4] Of course, a mottled snake was still a snake.

“I was thinking of putting it as one of the negotiation conditions. It would be better to be located closer even for the other guilds, so it wouldn’t be hard to extort it.”

Landlord, and a new building’s landlord at that. Calm down, the corners of my mouth. Let’s not act too obvious.

Then I could move Myeongwoo over to the new building instead of here. I would put a large equipment workshop there and provide a place so that we wouldn’t have to give away a commission fee to the Association when selling and just directly do it.

“If you’re building a new building, it would take quite some time, so you would probably need to provide a temporary venue.”

“That is not necessary. Since there are Awakened People and equipment that increase stats. And if you add assistance skills and dungeon by-products, the construction time will be able to be shortened to a certain extent.”

That they would stick in Awakened People and dungeon items in simple construction, it was senselessly throwing around money. The construction fees would be higher than the land cost, the building cost.

Though it didn’t have anything to do with me since it wasn’t my money.

Anyways they were giving me a building. Since it was at a killer location and would have

special facilities with enormous materials costs, I couldn't gauge the market price of even just the building. And even if I brought in only Myeongwoo and Suk Hayan, crazy, you could only say the value would be crazy. Of course, I would be there too.

'No, instead of just moving the location of Myeongwoo and Suk Hayan, should I make them affiliated with me?'

I was originally thinking of putting him in Haeyeon after he got his skill, but if a place to put Forge appeared, my building, I didn't necessarily need to do so. The same for Suk Hayan.

It would be incredibly unfortunate for Suk Simyeong, but there were some worries about putting too many things in one basket called Haeyeon, which hadn't grown enough yet. It would be enough with Yerim plus raising Kim Sunghan.

In the first place, Haeyeon was a Hunter guild prioritized on dungeon attacks.

If you pushed in, in a short period of time, magic beast rearing and equipment production and even dungeon measurement, it might become poison.

'No matter how precious and good for your body the food is, you should eat only enough to digest.'

Instead of combining without countermeasures, it would be better to divide the group and collaborate. Then, once we unyieldingly take our places, we could combine.

‘Good, let’s divide.’

I looked pityingly at Suk Simyeong, who was chattering about future plans. I was sorry because it felt like I was giving and then taking it back, but still, Haeyeon was number 1, so please be satisfied with that.

“.....What?”

While there was a commotion over the appearance of a slime dungeon, Haeyeon quietly alerted the giant guilds and the Hunter Association about the magic beast rearing skill.

The reaction was of course explosive, and the negotiations were smoothly progressing, when.

“Coming here? To meet me?”

I stared dumfoundedly at my dongsaeng, who came to relay the news to me. I mean, did these guild leader people have so little to do that they would deign to directly come here?

[1] actually it’s ‘background’ but I think you don’t refer to ppl as ‘background 1, 2, etc.’ in eng? Idk tho. ‘Extra’ just made more sense for me

[2] lit. 'scam/con/fraud character' (or rather, the shortened vers of it, which is 'scam ke' w the 'ke' being the 1st syllable of the eng word 'character' transliterated into krn) which basically means a comic or game character who is stronger than all the other ones

[3] I've never been to an apt in the u.s. that has these but in some krn apts, there's a little enclosed space right when you enter an apt, where you leave your shoes and stuff, and then there's another door out of the enclosed space into the rest of the apt

[4] so what I've been tl-ing as 'snake' is specifically a 'red-banded snake' (apparently, *dinodon rufozonatum*), but I used a simpler tl bc yj is using it metaphorically and in krn it is specifically the red-banded snake that is used to mean a 'sly, insidious person', whereas it's just 'snake' in eng. Though I've seen it tl'd as 'sly fox' (if we're going w animal metaphors), but idk which is the better tl bc 'snake' in eng tends to carry the connotation of 'backstabber', which is similar enough but subtly diff, ya kno? Anyways idk if 'mottled snake' is the right term for the 2nd one though, bc when I tried to look up the eng name, the only thing the krn-eng dict gave me was the metaphorical meaning, which is... gold digger. Anyways I couldn't find out exactly what type of snake it was and all the krn dict gave me was 'a snake with multicolored lines/spots', so...

Chapter 41: < My Dongsaeng is (1) >

< My Dongsaeng is... (1) >

"Of course, there's no need for hyung to meet them. You can refuse."

Yoohyun said firmly. Wasn't it that he didn't want to let us meet, rather than there was no

reason for us to meet?

Then again, I didn't know what it was like at other times, but in front of me at least, this guy's qualification to be a guild leader disappeared. Since the guy who should wheedle me into it even if I didn't want to, was the first to say that I didn't need to and put his foot down.

"If I say that I don't want to, then those guys wouldn't come."

"They definitely wouldn't."

"Hey, how do you think it would look for the 3 big guild leaders to deign to directly show up at Haeyeon? It would definitely be 'Haeyeon must be seizing the initiative'. So what's with 'there is no need to meet'? You should be like 'won't you show your face just once, hyung'."

Of course, I didn't want to meet them. It was annoying. Still, listening to that guy who was supposed to be a guild leader say nonsense, I couldn't just overlook it.

...It couldn't be that he was aiming for this and purposely said 'you can refuse', right? There was no way my brother[1] was that much of a snake.

"Bu-."

“From now on, don’t say ‘but’ in front of me.”

Yoohyun closed his mouth, and then opened it again.

“However-.”

“You can’t say ‘however’ and ‘even so’ and ‘still’ either. Don’t put a negative conjunctive adverb in front of your words.”

That guy turned sullen. How did that young guy treat me coldly for several years? Since the amazing person from 5 years later was still vivid in my mind, the twenty-year-old child was sometimes unfamiliar.

And my memory was for 30 years, so you could say there was a ten-year difference between me and this young guy. Even a five-year difference was a lot – to think it was ten years. It meant that when I was an adult, Yoohyun was still a tiny elementary schooler.

He was really young.

“How big of a deal is showing my face once that you would worry? At any rate, it’s a face that’ll be sold to the entire country soon anyways.”

“...You don’t feel burdened? They’re difficult opponents.”

“I don’t feel burdened, though it’s annoying. Still, they’re the clients so you should present the goods with the mind of a salesman who received a jackpot order.”

I also understood wanting to directly check with their own eyes since the investment was formidable. Even for me, I would be uneasy making it official with just looking at the visual materials. And highest rank familiars would be completely unhelpful partners for the amazing S-Rank-nims, so it was enough to be anxious.

“If hyung is okay with it I won’t stop it. But, they’ll probably bring an Awakened People appraiser too.”

“Awakened People appraiser? What’s the rank of the appraisal skill?”

“A-Rank.”

It was only possible for appraisal skills, which examined others’ skills or stats, to check people with ranks one level lower. If it was an A-Rank skill, I wouldn’t need to worry... or not, shit. I had lied saying I had a C-Rank skill.

“Hey, Yoohyun? I think it’ll be a little awkward for my C-Rank skill to be discovered.”

“It’s okay. Since the people coming over know that Awakening Centers will form soon. They probably won’t really pay attention to a skill that Awakens Unawakened People. And you said you can only check ranks once a month. I said so before, but if it’s at that level, it won’t draw much attention.”

No, the problem was that I didn’t have that skill.

“Still, it’s icky. Do you have any items that hide skills? If it’s one C-Rank, it could be easily hidden.”

“You can’t. If you’re caught, it’ll be awkward. Since they’re bringing the appraiser because it’s possible to make guesses after seeing the other skills even though they can’t appraise the magic beast rearing skill. Hyung has two E-Rank skills and one C-Rank skill as initial skills, with getting the magic beast rearing as the 10-level skill. If you happen to have other skills apart from those, or don’t, you could receive suspicion.”

“You talked about the C-Rank skill too?”

“I haven’t said anything about it yet, but if you use an item, the appraiser can notice... hyung.”

Yoohyun looked straight into my eyes as he said.

“Did you happen to hide something from me?”

“That’s.....”

Shit, I couldn’t do anything about this now. If I was caught I was going to excuse it by saying that I raised the rank by growing the skill, but to think that I would meet with an A-Rank appraiser so soon.

And it would make no sense for a C-Rank skill to have already become A-Rank.

“Actually, that skill is A-Rank.”

I just confessed it. Even up to 5 years later, Awakened People appraisal skills were at most A-Rank, so I probably wouldn’t get caught.

“Hyung!”

Yoohyun suddenly yelled. Ah, what, why. Everyone else also lived hiding their skills.

“An A-Rank, that’s completely different from what you said before!”

“Well, the effect is pretty much the same.”

“Pretty much?”

“...I can tell accurately what the expected Awakened rank is. Even the initial skills. And there’s no limit on the amount of times I can check.”

I hid the optimized Awakening. That guy gave an earth-shattering sigh. Then he stared at me with eyes filled with resentment.

“Did you not trust me, or-.”

“I trusted the truth that you were uselessly and excessively worrying. If I was like ‘actually an A-Rank skill came out~’ back then, the mood was so that you would have been like ‘ok, shut yourself in a room for three years and wait for me’.”

“.....It wasn’t that you couldn’t trust me?”

“If I couldn’t trust you, I would have already bolted.”

If that guy Yoohyun had been calm and composed like normal, I wouldn’t have hidden it and would have revealed it all. I couldn’t because the kid was a little off.

"I trust you. I believe that my younger brother is a guy who would risk even his life for me."

I saw with my own two eyes and underwent it so how could I not believe it?

At my words, Yoohyun put on a bashful expression.

"...I didn't think you would trust in me that much."

I also didn't even dream of that much until you went and did that stupid thing.

Thinking so, I became a little sorry. It was because this jerk foolishly hid things without a word, but I should treat him well to match the price of his life.

"For now, they're an A-Rank so you wouldn't be caught. It is impressive that you can accurately, limitlessly know expected Awakening ranks, but seeing how hyung hasn't brought over anyone other than Bak Yerim, it seems like high ranking Awakened People really are rare."

Yoohyun, who had calmed his agitation, said.

"That's right. I've used it occasionally, but far from stat S-Rank, I couldn't see any A-Ranks either. Though there were several up to B-Ranks."

"It seems like the initial skills of the B-Ranks weren't that great?"

"Just ordinary attack skills and defense skills. I can tell you if you want? There is a limit of 30 days for causing Awakening so I can't do that for you though."

"No. It'd be different with a healer or a rare special skill but B-Ranks aren't strictly necessary."

Right okay, you're amazing.

"I'll tell you if I see a good A-Rank."

"Yeah. And don't make it noticeable. Since being able to check for people expected to be A-Rank and higher, as well as their skills, is a really useful ability for snatching up high rank Hunters ahead of others. If it was once a month like you said at first, it wouldn't have much use in terms of probability, but it would be different if it's limitless."

"Even if I find them, it's not 100% likely they'll contract with you."

"Of course it's like that, but the value is big even with just getting the chance, and if they're not satisfactory, you can get rid of them before they Awaken. I'm not saying I would, but there should be people who'd want to do that?"

It was brutal, but also the truth.

“I won’t make it noticeable and only quietly tell you.”

“Good. There’s nothing you’re hiding other than that, right?”

“There isn’t.”

Actually there was a lot; I had two titles and eight skills following that.

One of those, with the lowest rank, was S-Rank. Unless an SS-Rank appraisal skill owner appeared, I wouldn’t be found out. There weren’t even S-Ranks, so would an SS-Rank suddenly pop up?

“There really isn’t, right?”

“I said there isn’t. Rationally, there’s no reason there would be anything else here. Even for S-Ranks it’s at most about four initial skills, so what else would I be hiding?”

Though it’d be different if you regressed. At my words, Yoohyun nodded his head.

“Alright. I won’t ask about your method for collecting enough data to predict dungeon appearances.”

...You said you wouldn’t ask so why were you looking at me with those eyes?

I didn’t speak at all so that guy became grouchy and left. Oho?

A custom car with a heavy color turned into the Haeyeon Guild’s parking lot. It wasn’t just that one car.

I turned my head from the window and looked at Suk Simyeong. Peace, who was lying at my feet, perked up his ears.

“Besides Hanshin Guild being added, there are no changes.”

He said. Hanshin was in a similar position as Haeyeon. The guild leader was also S-Rank. But Haeyeon had Yerim and now me, so soon the difference would swiftly increase.

And so, was it that all the country’s S-Rank guild leaders, except for the one overseas, were coming? It sure was extravagant.

“There shouldn’t be anything in particular.”

Suk Simyeong continued with an expression telling me to relax.

“And answer the questions with the shortest possible responses. You might get swept away and reveal pointless information if you answer in length.”

“I won’t speak nonsense so don’t worry.”

I also knew that my life was precious.

“They are people who are burdensome to meet, but please don’t be too anxious. Or would you like a sedative[2]?”

“I’m fine.”

I didn’t have any anxiety or uneasiness at all. Rather, I had so little anxiety that it was worrying.

Still, turning Fear Resistance off because of that was stupid, so I should force myself to be on alert. The guys I would be meeting were all dangerous and crazy guys, except for my brother. Truthfully, if you also asked if my brother was alright, he probably wasn’t.

In the first place, would there be more than a few Hunters in their right minds among those who went in and out of dungeons? It was basic knowledge that PTSD came with some work experience.

“I’m worried about Peace rather than me.”

As soon as the still young Horned Flame Lion met my eyes, he wagged his tail. I really didn’t want to take him along.

“They wouldn’t harm Peace or something like that in order to keep Haeyeon in check, right?”

He was the very first highest rank familiar that would be grown. It couldn’t be anything but unpleasant from the other guild leaders’ positions.

“They aren’t people stupid enough to do something stupid like that.”

That was so. If those bastard guilds happened to pull something, I would trample them no matter what actions they took. If I was willing to put all my cards on the table, there wasn’t anything I couldn’t do.

“Peace, come here.”

To get ready to go out, I held Peace. It seemed like he had somehow gotten heavier than a few days ago. Did he gain weight because he couldn't run around and play properly in the house that was cramped compared to his body?

The guild leaders visiting Haeyeon today were of the 3 big guilds plus one more, for a total of four. And the head of the Hunter Association was also brought over. Excluding the Association Head, they were all S-Rank Hunters.

'This is my first time seeing them for real.'

They were all people that I had only seen on TV. To think that those amazing people would all crowd in to meet me, I felt odd.

How should I say it, I actually wanted to lord my power. Over those people who would live as powerful figures, no as super powerful figures, for their whole life. If you wish to gain high ranking familiars, you must appeal well to me, super powerful people[3].

Of course, I probably couldn't do that. Before I became a landlord, I had to act like a well-behaved cat.

Before humbly meeting the super powerful people, I went through a security check. They even thoroughly checked that I was just a stat F who would have trouble opposing a C-Rank

even with equipment. Of course, my inventory was sealed also. Though it didn't actually get sealed.

"You have to go alone from here on."

So they were even blocking other people from entering. Who did they think would dare to touch those people gathered inside there?

"Peace, you have to be well-behaved. You can't growl and such."

-Kkiang

I didn't know what he understood that he would reply.

When I walked along a long hallway, a large door appeared. Instead of hesitating, I immediately opened it and went inside.

At the same time, gazes poured out. What, it seemed like they had realized that I had arrived even before I opened the door.

Then why didn't you open the door for me or something. Did you think holding a kid with one hand and pushing open a heavy door was easy? My kid was almost 10kg. You inconsiderate guys.

“Hello.”

Still, I smiled first. Smile.

It was a conference room with a serious design, but looking at the faces turned my way, it felt like I was visiting some entertainment agency.

Leaving out the Hunter Association Head with his hair streaked with gray, they all had sculpture-like faces and were young.

The Seseong Guild Leader in his late thirties was the oldest and the remaining were all older or younger than thirty. The youngest was of course the youthful twenty-year-old Yoohyun. Between those people, he sure was young.

‘To think there are four S-Ranks.’

Though it would be near impossible to put them in the standby positions.

“To our loving[4] clients, it is an honor to be able to meet you like this.”

While I was meeting them anyways, I laid down the bait. Just in case they would

unexpectedly get reeled in if I piled on a completely insincere business-like love ballad about ten thousand times. It might not work if it wasn't directed at a specific person, but it wasn't like my tongue would wear out by saying love, love, so what.

"If you have any questions, please ask comfortably, as many times as you like."

I will lovingly and sincerely answer you. Of course, I would only put in sincerity and just lightly season with truth.

At my words, Yoohyun slightly wrinkled his eyebrows and the Breaker[5] Guild Leader waved over a man standing off to one side.

"First, let's start with trying the the skill appraisal."

Yes, yes, let's try it as many times necessary.

[1] I was keeping it in bc I was keeping stuff like hyung as is, but I got tired of writing dongsaeng all the time so I'll be using '(younger) brother/sibling' now for the most part lol. anyways stuff like hyung/labels for older ppl is used often colloquially to call ppl whereas u don't really for labels for younger ppl so it makes sense not to transliterate it

[2] it's lit. stabilizer/tranquilizer but it probably means 'sedative' too

[3] lit. 'super A-nims', see ch 25 footnote [13] for details about 'A' but basically it means a person w power. I normally leave in the -nim whenever it comes up (except for when it comes after guild leader bc it gets kinda clunky), but I couldn't fit it here without it sounding weird so I left it out. Also the 'lord power' part is a verb using that 'A', lit. meaning 'acting like A', and means sth like 'going on a power trip'/'overusing one's power'.

[4] you can tl it as 'clients whom I love' as well, which is why it fits the keyword, but in context, in eng, it sounds better to use 'loving'. I realize that that implies the clients are the ones who are doing the loving but please just ignore that bc 'lovable' sounds weirder

[5] the eng word transliterated into krn

Chapter 42: < My Dongsaeng is (2) >

< My Dongsaeng is... (2) >

"Then, excuse me."

The man with the Awakened People appraisal skill said, coming towards me. I also wanted to look at the status windows of the people here, but if I used Seed-Leaf now, it would probably be noticeable.

I was receiving the attention of S-Ranks. If I turned my eyes toward the air, I would immediately be grabbed at the back of my neck for doing something suspicious.

-Keureureu

Peace, who was quietly in my arms, abruptly bared his canines. Soon after, the appraiser stepped back and spoke.

“Average stat F-Rank, the Agility Up and Mental Up skills are both E-Rank.”

“Did it feel the appraisal skill being used? It’s sharp.”

The Hanshin Guild Leader said with admiration.

Hanshin Guild Leader, Bak Mingyu. He was an S-Rank Hunter specialized in defense and I think exactly thirty this year. He was originally an ordinary office worker, and was an easygoing man with a weak presence among the country’s S-Ranks. Hanshin Guild as a whole also didn’t stand out significantly and was an easy high rank.

On a particular note, he had a bad relationship with Kim Sunghan. Specifically, Bak Mingyu one-sidedly regarded Kim Sunghan as a nuisance.

Had he instinctively recognized Kim Sunghan’s talent? Since, if Kim Sunghan became an S-Rank, the premium of being the country’s sole defense-specialized S-Rank Hunter would fall.

“A still immature thing at a C-Rank level? Hansoo-ssi, try using your skill again.”

The Breaker Guild Leader said to the appraiser. She waved him over a while ago too; did she bring over the appraiser? Or he might be a Breaker Guild member.

One of the 3 big guilds, Breaker. That guild leader was the country's sole female S-Rank Hunter Moon Hyuna. Though she wasn't the sole one anymore.

She was in her late twenties, her previous occupation used to be a tennis player, and her main weapon was a big spear so she had the most interest in a familiar. The country's guild with the most familiars currently was Breaker, and 2 years later, they had spent a fortune on buying a high rank familiar from overseas.

-Kyaang!

When the appraiser used his skill again, Peace howled loudly. This time, the distance was even further so was he really detecting it?

“It's okay, Peace.”

While soothing the agitated Peace, the gazes toward us became obviously heated.

“This must be true.”

The Hunter Association Head admired, surprised.

“If it’s a Horned Flame Lion, it’d be an S-Rank dungeon boss rank, right?”

Moon Hyuna asked, looking at Yoohyun. He was 8 years your junior, but he was a guild leader and S-Rank like you, so why were you dropping the honorifics?

“It was not a singular entity, but three adults, excluding the juvenile. The total abilities were less than a singular boss but they were definitely at the level of an S-Rank.”

“Since the first attack was two months ago, the second attack must be in a month. How’s this, young master[1]. Giving it to us if another juvenile appears.”

“A trade for an highest grade juvenile familiar with Cold Resistance is possible.”

Yoohyun smiled softly and said. Moon Hyuna also raised the tips of her mouth back at him.

“Speaking of, you said that the lovely kid hoobae-nim’s 10-level skill was ice-affiliated. I wonder exactly what kind of skill it is. I’m curious.”

“Hunter Bak Yerim asked to relay that excessive interest is burdensome.”

"It's being friendly between the sole two women S-Rank Hunters in the country. And it would be more comfortable for Yerim-yang to have a guild leader of the same gender. Of course, I'm not saying I'll ignore the contract and snatch her away. 3 years is quick."

Then she smiled. Wow, she was really an unpleasant woman. Of course, it was up to Yerim for whichever guild she contracted with 3 years later, and approaching ahead to time and coaxing didn't contradict business ethics.

Still, I didn't like it. Don't slight my younger brother, and treat each other respectfully.

"I heard that Haeyeon has already purchased several baby monsters; are you not being excessively greedy?"

MKC's guild leader Choi Sukwon said. Why was that guy fighting now.

Choi Sukwon's previous occupation was a soccer player and was even the captain of the national team. I had liked him too but seeing him now, he was terrible. Still, since there were honorifics, plus 1 point.

"It seems that the news was quick, despite that they have not arrived in the country yet."

“Did you think I would not know even though even the intention to purchase was revealed publicly? Seven high ranks and one highest rank. It seems like you swept up and gathered all of them.”

Choi Sukwon said, slightly agitated. Eight of them? Yoohyun, were you thinking of wringing out this hyung to death? Though of course, he probably wouldn't be giving them to me at once.

Anyways, I didn't know that a new highest rank monster would appear already. Was it thanks to bad stock?

“It is possible to trade a highest rank juvenile with a highest rank with Cold Resistance, or ten high rank juveniles including a high rank with Cold Resistance. Please contact me any time.”

Yoohyun said leisurely. It meant that there wasn't a highest rank with Cold Resistance among the highest rank monsters bought this time. I was wondering what kind of guy it would be.

“It seems like Haeyeon's young master is getting quite a lot of profit due to his hyung-nim.”

Moon Hyuna beamed as she stood from her seat. At her steps coming towards me, Yoohyun's easygoing expression hardened slightly.

Don't let it show, punk. Stay there quietly.

“It seems we’ve kept a precious person standing up for too long a time. Here, here, please sit.”

Moon Hyuna said, personally pulling out a chair. The smiling face really was pretty at least. Even her figure was perfect and she was an impressive beauty, but her height was also impressively tall. Even with a glance, it seemed like it was over 180.

This was why I hated stat S-Ranks. Would Yerim also grow bigger than me? It was sad.

“Thank you.”

When I obediently sat in the chair, Moon Hyuna tilted her upper body towards me. The ratio was good so I didn’t know when I was looking at the TV, but it seemed like her build was better than mine too. Before the regression, I had built up my body a little too, but now... I was just an F-Rank that had gone into a dungeon exactly once.

“To think that Haeyeon’s young master’s hyung, the super rookie’s guardian, is even raising a cute cat. If I took Han Yoojin-ssi would they all come along?”

“Would it be so?”

I smiled back and replied.

"I am a single item without a giveaway or a gift."

"It's regretful but I can be satisfied with just the original item, how about it?"

"I am sorry but I am not for sale."

Saying so, I looked around slightly. I checked Yoohyun because I was worried but he wasn't looking this way at all. That's right, if you can't manage your expression, just don't look.

"Even for your brother?"

Long fingers touched my neck. Peace, who was lying down on my lap, raised his eyes. Yoohyun's head turned this way and he met my eyes.

It would be okay to say it clearly while I was at it.

"There is an exception to the no sale. But."

"But?"

"I said that I would make an exception if he becomes the country's best."

"That's fun."

Moon Hyuna laughed in a low tone.

"Then that means Seseong Guild could buy you right away?"

At her words, I moved my gaze. To the man who hadn't said anything as of yet.

Seseong[2] Guild Leader Sung Hyunjae. Of course the guild, but the man himself was also the Hunter called the country's strongest. He was looking at me with slight interest.

Since it seemed like they wanted an answer, I gave them one.

"Being the country's best is a discount for my younger brother."

I wore a smile and continued.

"For others, they would have to be about the world's best for me to recognize them and make an exception."

“You’re full of confidence!”

Moon Hyuna yelled cheerfully. Stop beating my shoulder, this woman. It hurts. Peace was also baring his teeth.

“Like dongsaeng, like hyung, it reminds me of that time an eighteen-year-old kid ran around saying he would make his own guild. Still, maybe because he’s acting his age, the hyung is a lot milder than the dongsaeng.”

.....I mean, what was wrong with my younger brother? He should be the mildest out of the people gathered here; the criticism was too harsh.

“My younger brother is milder than I am.”

I couldn’t bear it and said something. Moon Hyuna widened her eyes exaggeratedly.

“Are you sincere about that joke?”

“Of course, I am sincere-.”

“Oh my god, hyung-nim! So cute!”

Then she laughed uproariously. I mean, what...

‘...Wait.’

The other people were laughing too. Except for Yoohyun, who was sitting down acting haughty. On top of that, even the Seseong Guild Leader laughed as if dumbfounded.

These people wouldn’t be free enough to put me up as the target of a hidden camera.....
Yoo-Yoohyun? Your reputation seemed a little weird.....

“Wow, that crazy bastard, because it’s in front of his hyung-nim, acting innoce-.”

“Breaker Guild Leader.”

Yoohyun cut off Moon Hyuna’s words.

“It seems that your words are a little harsh.”

“Really crazy! No wonder, you’re seriously polite today! I was wondering if you’ve suddenly matured, ahaha-.”

Then she started to laugh again. She seemed like she would actually roll on the floor. I also wanted to know what was so funny, but.....

‘Acting innocent?’

What nonsense was that? Our Yoohyun was good and well-behaved since he was young. He listened well and didn’t really do anything to make me worry.

Of course, even I knew that you couldn’t continue being good and well-behaved in order to become a guild leader at a young age. Still, ‘crazy bastard’ was too harsh.

“Being friendly between brothers is something good.”

The Hanshin Guild Leader said. Was that something you say after being the second loudest to laugh?

Shit, you guys were crazy so my brother must have acted so to match his opponents. It was obvious they bothered him to death saying that a young kid didn’t know to bend. Just looking at how Yoohyun worried over my safety, they were bastards with pitch black hearts; you should shoot hungry wolves, not shake a piece of foxtail grass.

“Geez, hyung-nim! That’s right, it’s good to treat him well. He became a good younger

brother.”

Moon Hyuna, who was hunched over at the waist, raised her body and said. I really hated this woman.

“Still, to say that we have to be the world’s best, I heard what you said, but are you really going to stay unaffiliated?”

“Yes. I think it is better that way. Instead of being affiliated to one place, drawing back one step and doing business impartially in a familiar production, administrative position would be good also for various guilds.”

“But wouldn’t you actually be affiliated to Haeyeon?”

The MKC Guild Leader asked, slightly wrinkling his forehead.

“We are collaboration partners to a certain extent. It is hard for me to handle alone so needing help is inevitable. If you consider it like that, everyone here is also being treated preferentially like Haeyeon is, through the reward of the negotiation. Of course within the country, but there are many guilds overseas that need familiars. You have received the chance to become a lot more advantaged than them.”

From now on, the five guilds gathered here would be able to cement their superiority over, of course the country’s, but also other guilds overseas. One of the conditions for the

negotiation was to give each of the five, the maximum number I could raise, to each of them.

Of course they could make S-Rank attack teams with a familiar faster than others, and it was possible to do business with other guilds with an empty seat.

It was a good condition, enough to make Suk Simyeong complain that we were being too good to them.

“Also, my value is at its peak right now and will continue to fall from now on, so you do not need to worry about my relationship with Haeyeon. As you know, high rank, highest rank familiars are not expendables.”

I didn't tell them how long the lifespan of a monster was. It really wasn't short at all. Even low rank monsters reared for research use were fine for over seven years, so the probability was high that lifespans for high ranks were longer.

So even after just four to five years, people who would come looking for me would start to decrease. The demand wouldn't completely disappear, but it would work with just providing three to four a year. And if an S-Rank or higher tamer or a similar skill holder appeared, then my work would end even faster.

“It is my dream to retire about halfway in several years and live leisurely, as the requests for

rearing decreases.”

This was sincerity without a single lie. I should live managing my building while holding one baby monster in my arms. Ah, just thinking about it was good. It was a perfect life.

It would be perfect if I got a lover who wasn’t affected by the keyword or thought of a neighbor oppa as a caregiver.

“Hyung-nim speaks well. Then let’s return to the subject and finish adjusting the contract.”

Moon Hyuna returned to her seat and smiled.

Of course the framework, but even the meat of the negotiation items were already there so the adjustment went smoothly.

The main points of the negotiation items were as follows.

The five guilds would guarantee my and my building’s safety.

I would receive the five guilds’ rearing commissions preferentially. But, the number acquired in advance for each guild would be limited to 1 per 2 months.

The construction of the building that would contain the rearing facilities would be by the investments of the four guilds, with Haeyeon exempted.

The ownership of the completed building would be mine.

There were small matters outside of that but the important things were those four.

And the most advantageous part for me was 'my building's safety would be guaranteed' – this part right here.

Of course, it was limited to this one place that would be built and a time period was also set. But there was no clause that said only I could enter.

In other words, it meant that whether it was Yoo Myeongwoo or Suk Hayan or anyone else, if I, the building owner, received them, they could receive the protection from the highest ranked five guilds of the country .

Of course Yoohyun, but the other guild leaders too probably wouldn't even dream of the things I would start. Still, if I gave them priority like with the familiar rearing, then it definitely wouldn't be a loss for them either.

As for me, I just had to relax and receive rent.

Like that, we stamped the contract and various questions about Peace were exchanged a little, and it quickly ended. There weren't exactly any tough questions, so of course the guild leaders and even the Association Head were subtly friendly to me.

Well, it was a situation to be friendly and treating me well wasn't something bad. But it was a bit uncomfortable.

Especially Moon Hyuna's gaze that was saying I was so extremely cute. If you took out the regression, I was younger, but she was looking at me like she was treating me like some youngest little sibling.

Since she would provide a lot of money for building the building, I should bear it.

"Thanks to hyung-nim, I had fun for the first time in a while."

Moon Hyuna left the room while throwing me a wink. Ah, yes. Since you were saying it was so, it was quite worthwhile.

Even though I didn't do much, I was tired.

"Peace, stop biting the chair and come down."

Did he get an interest in breaking furniture? That chair should be expensive.

I was going to go bring him over myself when someone blocked my path. It was the Seseong Guild Leader, Sung Hyunjae.

“I’ll keep the exception condition in mind.”

He said, merrily. What exception... no, wait. Please just forget it.

“Then, I’ll see you again soon.”

He lightly patted my shoulder and passed me. Ah, what. It wasn’t like it was easy to become the world’s best guild, and even 5 years later, he couldn’t. I probably wouldn’t need to worry about it.

Anyways, it was over.

[1] used to call a young unmarried nobleman back in the old days. Also a respectful way of calling ‘unmarried younger brother of one’s husband’ which is how it’s used solely nowadays since there aren’t any noblemen in current society. But it’s used as the former meaning here, obviously.

[2] another name for jupiter (the planet), the more common name is 목성 (mohk-sung). or idk, it might be sth else, there wasn’t any hanja so idk

Chapter 43: < My Dongsaeng is (3) >

< My Dongsaeng is... (3) >

‘High rank monsters wouldn’t be found quickly, and it would take quite some time for the kids coming across water to arrive so I guess I’ll be free for a while again.’

It was still impossible to transport monsters by plane. So the monsters bought by Haeyeon were currently scattered here and there across the ocean. It would be good if they arrived safely without any accidents.

“Hyung.”

After everyone left, the remaining Yoohyun called me. I held Peace, who was exposing the framework of a chair, and turned to look at that guy.

“Don’t pay attention to what the Breaker Guild Leader said. She’s usually rumored to be a craz- weird woman.”

Seeing how he was purposely explaining, it seemed like there really was something bothering him.

“I’m not. They’re people who’ve known you for at most two to three years.”

He must have changed. It wasn't possible for him to be exactly as he was when he was young. But this guy risked his life and saved me 5 years later.

Whatever anyone said, it was enough with that.

I said it was okay, but Yoohyun had a more strained expression instead.

"...Still, I haven't done anything to pull on my conscience."

"Really?"

"...Mostly?"

"Hey, at any rate, I also didn't think you lived to now, honestly and without a single flaw."

I became clean because I regressed, too. At my words, that brother of mine felt wronged.

"A while ago you were saying you trusted me."

"Is that the same as this? I've lived five more years than you. I know more or less everything

I need to know.”

If you were talking about experience, it was as much as living ten more years.

“No matter what you did, I think that you did so because you had no choice. Even if it isn’t so, well, people favor those they know[1]. And I’m not an upright person who would only lose his anger when he digs up his flesh and blood’s flaws one by one.”

Rather, I was the opposite. Reasonably covering and overlooking things... if I was a clean person, I wouldn’t have been able to live to now.

“But are you really going to go if the world’s best guild tells you to come?”

Yoo Hyun asked, half-jokingly.

“If they were firmly the best, what would my opinion matter? Anyways, there isn’t a place like that.”

There wasn’t a guild playing at the world stage level yet. It was only just handling their own country and even 5 years later, because of the increased dungeons, it might be possible over neighboring one to two countries but influencing the entire world was hard. At best, it was at the level of snatching away Chinese Hunters or taking the rights to a valuable dungeon from a small and weak nation.

Of course, there was no way for the situation of the Hunter community to flow exactly the way it did before the regression. Even with just high ranking familiars becoming widespread, a lot of things would change.

'...If it's like this, even if I said I knew about the future, it would become useless quickly.'

Though I was going to earn enough and then retire anyways.

"When do you want me to look at your skills?"

"I don't think I'll be able to make time for a while... Sorry. Getting involved with the slime dungeon and now even familiars, I got a little busy."

Seeing how it was a dungeon with a lot of profit, it seemed like flies were swarming.

"Still, the guilds that came today probably won't be able to pick a fight? Especially the Breaker Guild Leader was fretting over getting you to make a deal for at least one high rank monster."

She quoted all sorts of prices, saying that it didn't need other skills and just needed to be swift and strong.

“Within the country, besides the Association acting a little bothersome, there isn’t much of a problem. The most difficult is Japan.”

“What, why are those bastards meddling in another country?”

“Since there isn’t a slime dungeon in Japan yet. Far from A-Rank, not even a C-Rank has appeared, so they have to import everything. But since an A-Rank came from our country, which is close by, they’re having a fit. And, not guild, but at the government level, at that.”

I was about to curse. Monkey bastards with no conscience. When was it when it was decided that the government would have minimum interference in guild matters and would mediate through the Association? Was the government interfering and persecuting because it was another country?

“...Has the government not been prohibited from interfering with foreign guilds yet?”

“Yeah. It’s restricted to one’s own country. Still, it’s not like Haeyeon entered Japan and even the exchange is little, so if you take out familiars, there isn’t much damage right now.”

“Familiars? Why... Is one of the monsters you bought, from Japan?”

Yoohyun nodded his head.

“One high rank monster juvenile. It’s held up in a port right now. If it really doesn’t work out, I was going to pass it over to Breaker or a different guild.”

“They sure are acting nasty.”

“Even if they openly pick a fight, it’s better for us to resolve it as nicely as possible, so it became annoying. If it really doesn’t work out, we can also ask the Association, the government side, but it would be best to not be indebted like that.”

“They wouldn’t interfere for you on their own? No matter what, it’s still their country’s guild.”

“They probably would interfere if it goes too far. The government’s interference with guilds being minimized is a double-edged sword, so normally it’s great but in these cases, it’s difficult.”

So getting a slime dungeon didn’t mean constant profit. I had guessed that the other guilds in the country would pick a fight, but suddenly it was Japan. Still, it probably was better than giving it to someone else.

“For looking at your skills, just tell me whenever you have time. It wouldn’t be hard for me to make time.”

I could take a day or so off from looking after monsters, and besides that, the schedule... ah, the broadcast.

Did I have to go?

“Han Yoojin-nim’s final Awakened Person rank has been determined to be B.”

The Hunter Association employee said with a smile.

An eternal F-Rank jumped up to B in one stroke. Wow. If all my titles and skills were revealed, even A-Rank could be possible, but I was satisfied with this much. Unless your stats were around B-Rank at minimum, you should take it easy.

“If there are objections to the determined rank, please go through the information center to submit the contents of and related materials for the complaint within 10 business days.”

When there was a large gap between stats and skills like with me, usually the Awakened Person rank was determined in two ways. The rank of the dungeon one is able to attack, or through a meeting within the Association.

I was the latter of course. With my current abilities, it would be hard to attack even an F-Rank without my equipment. Even if I got an adult S-Rank monster’s help, C-Ranks and higher would be dangerous. Since I had a glass body that would pass over to the afterlife with one accidentally flung over piece of debris.

“A B-Rank, isn’t that too low?”

When I received the reissued license, because it was Yerim who was waiting, she blurted out sullenly. Next to her, A-Rank Hunter Kim Jiyeon was standing. The two people followed me for my protection.

“Rank measurement is supposed to prioritize dungeon attacks. If your stats rank is F, no matter how good your skills are, A-Rank is the highest you can get.”

Though it might be different if you had an incredible defense skill and could completely protect yourself.

I listened a reasonable amount to Yerim’s unsatisfied grumbling and got in the car. Maybe rumors about me hadn’t spread much because there weren’t any people approaching. Though there were gazes peeking from afar.

“Ahjussi, when will you look at my skills?”

Yerim pestered as soon as she sat in the car backseat. After safely getting 10 levels and Pale Rain, it was that talk daily.

“I told you to come after getting two more.”

“Even 20 levels is far, much less 30 levels! Ah, do you want to go into a dungeon with me? If you get 20 levels, you might get another good skill.”

I hadn't gotten the 10 levels skill either. Did you think one would come out because it was 20 levels? Before that, even the dungeon rank didn't suit.

“Don't say nonsense. Right, I heard you're filming too?”

“Yes, you know the Association said that three A-Rank and higher Hunters have to accompany you if you're going a film a broadcast with monsters. While they're at it, apparently they're going to make a Hunter feature too. They said Moon Hyuna unni[2] was going to appear too.”

...Why that woman again. Did a guild leader have nothing to do?

“But why 'unni'? I'm younger than the Breaker Guild Leader, okay?”

“If she isn't married, then obviously she's an 'unni'.”

“.....What about me?”

“You aren’t married but you have kids. You say ‘dad is’ to Peace at anything.”

I felt wronged. It was true I was raising Peace, but there was the barrier of species so why would you treat me like a dad?

“Don’t discriminate, and be fair.”

“Then I’ll tell Hyuna unni that, about unni, ahjussi really-.”

“Thinking on it, she really is an unni! Call her unni.”

That’s right, what did age matter? Strength and authority were the best. A woman who swung around a large spear about twice her height as if it was a fly swatter and knocked down monsters was an unni even if she was one hundred and thirty years older instead of thirteen. Yes.

This was the third time going to the broadcasting station. Of course, including before the regression.

The first appearance was when I got a short interview about Yoohyun, and the second was Hunter-related crim... hm... Well it was something like that.

Those two times' common point was that I was treated coldly. But it was different today.

"Wow, that's that monster?"

"It's so cute! This is my first time seeing a monster this close!"

"The ones that came out of dungeon breaks were all disgusting, but that cat is pretty."

With each step we got attention. 90% of the reason was because of Peace, who was in my arms, but there was a considerable amount of people interested in me.

It was because a newsstory about familiars was up on 9 o'clock news last night.

It took quite a long time and reported the huge advantages you could get from having high rank and highest rank familiars.

From the explanation that dungeon attack times would be decreased up to 50%, the response was hot. Comments about familiars covered the portal site and Haeyeon Guild took third in search rankings following the profits of S-Rank dungeons and familiars.

Though my name was actually lower than Yoohyun's.

‘When the broadcast comes out, we’ll be compared again.’

It would be a relief if just ranks were compared, but it was obvious that I’d be criticized about my appearance. Saying the brothers really didn’t look alike and such. Wasn’t it too much comparing me with a guy who could outshine celebrities because he got S-Rank stat compensation?

I should cut off my internet for a while in order to protect my mental state.

‘Even the waiting room is large.’

Before, they didn’t even give me a chair, but now there was a comfortable looking sofa, and snacks and drinks prepared on top of a table. To one side, Yerim was getting her hair, which had become disheveled while coming here, and makeup done. And on the sofa.

“Come here, hyung-nim!”

Breaker Guild Leader Moon Hyuna was sitting with her legs crossed. Why did she keep on calling me hyung-nim?

“Hello.”

Last time, her face was bare but today it seemed like she had on a little bit of makeup. She

really was a beauty, but... it would be good if I could just see her face from far away.

"Come here quickly and sit. Do you want candy?"

"I don't really like it."

I pretended not to see her hand patting the seat next to her telling me to sit there, and sat on the opposite sofa. As soon as I sat, I quickly grabbed Peace who was about to jump down.

"You can't. Behave."

-Kkeueung

"I played with you a lot before we came here. You can't make trouble here."

As the days went by, the activity level was increasing so it was difficult. I really should provide a large residence at least even temporarily; I didn't think I could keep him in the house.

"Looks like you've completely fallen into the role of raising kids?"

Moon Hyuna moved over to my side in no time and said. Move away.

“Please don’t stick so close. People will misunderstand if they see.”

“So what. You’re the person who’ll raise my kid.”

...Fuck, goosebumps. Why would you say it like that? Just then, Yerim yelled as if she wouldn’t lose.

“Our ajussi will raise my kid too, you know!”

“Yerim!”

Crazy, what was she saying! No matter if that ‘kid’ wasn’t that kind of kid!

“Why not, isn’t it true?”

“Even if it’s true you can’t say it like that!”

And Moon Hyuna, stop laughing you demon.

“Hyung-nim, I really like you. You won’t come to me?”

“Please extend your invitation after you fill the condition.”

“Picky.”

-Keuheung

Just then, Peace raised his ears. Yerim also shot up from her seat. A step slower, I could feel the flow of air in the surroundings.

“...What is this?”

I knew, but I pretended not to. Moon Hyuna smiled and lightly waved her hand. I saw the Breaker Guild members who came with her explain something to the confused people. But I couldn’t hear anything.

“I just blocked off sounds. A simple skill application.”

It didn’t seem that simple. Moon Hyuna’s skill application ability stood out and was famous. Not yet, but a few years later. Even now, she should be pretty adept.

“Is there something you need to say in secret?”

“Rather than in secret, you have to be careful when you talk behind someone’s back.”

Behind someone’s back?

“Hyung-nim, you really trust your younger brother?”

I was wondering what she was going to say; so it was behind my brother’s back.

“Of course I trust him.”

It was such an obvious remark that my forehead automatically wrinkled. At my attitude, Moon Hyuna quirked her lips.

“When I first met Han Yoohyun, I thought ‘a kid really is a kid’. Since, he ran around saying he would make his own guild, ignoring all the powerful people holding out a hand. I thought he didn’t know his place.”

...For that part, I also thought that my brother didn’t know fear. It turned out well but during that, the probability of things collapsing was high.

“Of course me, but the MKC Guild Leader also is a puppet leader. How could young kids who were only doing sports be able to get to managing a giant guild? They said I could hand over all the annoying stuff and just take the seat of guild leader and live grandly, so I was like yay and took their hand. The terms aren’t bad. It’s comfortable.”

Moon Hyuna continued, shaking a long finger.

“It’s similar for the Hanshin Guild Leader. A minor employee of a Hanshin Group subsidiary became the president’s son-in-law. Among the country’s five high rank guilds, the real guild leaders are Seseong’s Sung Hyunjae and Haeyeon’s Han Yoohyun, just those two.”

Moon Hyuna spoke meaningfully but it wasn’t particularly surprising to me. A huge portion of why two of the 3 big guilds collapsed was because of those puppet leaders.

Even Moon Hyuna, who said it was comfortable now, couldn’t bear the narrow cage in the end. MKC Guild Leader Choi Sukwon was similar. Though Hanshin stayed to the end, maybe because it was involved through marriage.

“You’re not that surprised?”

“No, I am surprised enough.”

“Hmm. The response is too lukewarm. It was a young kid who didn’t even have an ID card yet. Seeing that kid ultimately make his own guild and cement his place, I was convinced this bastard was a freak. Obviously it’s not normal, right?”

“Saying it’s not normal after seeing his abilities stand out a bit, your words are excessive.”

“Excessive?”

Moon Hyuna laughed dumbfoundedly.

“Hyung-nim. Exactly what does hyung-nim think of his younger brother?”

“That’s.....”

After hesitating a bit, I just spoke. It was something I had been interviewed about before the regression, and wasn’t a story I really needed to hide.

“He was a good younger brother beyond reproach. Since he was little, he listened well and didn’t worry me...”

“Hyung-nim was the one who raised him, right? After losing your parents early. That’s not normal.”

She continued, clicking her tongue.

“A good younger sibling who listens well in poor household without parents. That doesn’t even come up in stories kids see these days. It’s not realistic.”

“To that extent-.”

“Kids are kids. They get frustrated and angry if something’s lacking, they make trouble to get attention, they compare themselves with other people, and beyond pestering their guardian to buy everything they want, they even resent them. Still, a parent can still adore their kid, but brothers? I also have a younger sibling so I know, but they’re really an enemy bastard. Of course, there are siblings who get along well. In peaceful households where the parents give a lot of care. Even so, they don’t not fight. Especially younger brothers are a bunch that need to be put in their place – the many older siblings in the world would probably agree?”

.....I was a little taken aback. Was a good younger sibling who listened well really that weird?

“You could even say ‘an angel descended down~’. But an angel can’t trample over people and build a guild.”

Moon Hyuna shrugged her shoulders.

“I don’t intend to come between you. But hyung-nim, it’ll be good for you to think a little bit more about your brother.”

[1] lit. ‘arms [only] bend inwards’, an idiom w the above tl’d meaning.

[2] what girls call their older sisters or close female friends who are older, equiv to hyung/oppa/noona

Chapter 44: < Let Us Not Talk Behind Someone’s Back >

< Let Us Not Talk Behind Someone’s Back >

The face ostentatiously smiling was irritating. Not intending to come between us, yeah right.

Just then, Moon Hyuna’s cell phone rang.

“Oh, it seems like the younger brother heard.”

She lifted her cell phone and showed me. On the LCD, the words ‘Crazy Guy 2’ was showing up.

“The original crazy guy is definitely Sung Hyunjae, that ahjussi.”

“...You are not going to pick it up?”

“Will you pick up?”

I took the cell phone held out to me and pressed the call button.

[Moon Hyuna you-.]

“Yoohyun.”

I heard a short breath being drawn in.

[...Hyung?]

“Yeah. It’s me.”

[.....And the Breaker Guild Leader?]

“She’s smiling like her mouth will rip, next to me.”

“It’s not to that extent.”

Moon Hyuna complained.

[Are you okay? That woman didn't say anything weird?]

"She talked behind your back."

[.....What did she say?]

"In short, that you're not normal. But don't worry. Truthfully, it's two peas in a pod[1] so it's nothing new."

[...Huh? Hm?]

Yoohyun's voice was full of confusion. Moon Hyuna's eyes became round, too. Seeing that, the tips of my mouth quirked up.

You know how to talk behind someone's back – I know how to too. Wait, since it was in front of the person involved, was it in front of their face?

"Should I tell you an old story? It's something from 1 year ago. Specifically, the spring 1 year ago. April 2nd. Around 5 pm in Gyeonggi-do Icheon's[2] CS convenience store-."

“Han Yoojin-ssi!”

Moon Hyuna suddenly yelled as she snatched the cell phone away and turned it off. Her cheeks were slightly red.

“I-I mean, you wouldn’t, it’s probably not that.....”

“It seems like it is a story that the Breaker Guild Leader knows as well?”

“There shouldn’t be that many people who know it.....”

“It isn’t that there is no one at all who know it. I heard it by accident. I will keep secret who I heard it from.”

The embarrassing and crazy thing that Moon Hyuna wanted to hide was used as a card to make her lose face 4 years later. At that time, it was a secret that everyone got to know, but this time it wasn’t.

It really was an anecdote that you couldn’t forget and left a deep impression.

“...Fuck and I can’t kill to block your mouth either.”

The eyes that flashed towards me[3] were murderous.

But she couldn't raise a hand against me. She had already stamped the contract. Unless she was going to fight 5:1 including the Association, she could only hold it back.

And from the position of needing familiars the most, she would feel regretful laying a hand on me simply over something like this. Without me, you could only get high rank familiars after 2 years.

"So why did you talk about my brother behind his back? You reap what you sow; if you talk behind someone's back, others will talk behind your back."

When I scrunched my eyes and smiled, even her teeth grinded as if she was angry.

Just then, Yoohyun must have called again because the cell phone rang. Moon Hyuna's eyes darted up and down.

"You are not going to pick it up?"

".....You'll shut your mouth, right?"

“It is my loss, but I don’t want to listen to slander about my brother, so let us both keep our mouths shut.”

“Fine.”

I picked up the phone and passed over it by speaking vaguely. Moon Hyuna’s expression taking back the phone was as if she was chewing poop.

“You are formidable, Han Yoojin-ssi. I didn’t even dream that that story would come up. I can trust you, right?”

“Of course.”

“If it comes out, I’ll be very embarrassed and lose face and want to hide for about half a year, but it’ll be just that. But I’ll definitely kill the bastard who opened his mouth.”

Her voice was calm but I could definitely feel that it was full of sincerity. Especially at the part where she said she would kill. Did she mean there was a limit to what she could bear?

“Please don’t worry. Moon Hyuna-ssi is my loving client. If you hide for half a year, it would be difficult for me too, so why would I do something like that?”

“You speak well. There’s nothing else?”

Would there be nothing else? Appearances aside, I was an avid follower of Hunter related programs.

There was quite a lot I knew, but if I carelessly loosened my tongue, of course things would become annoying, but also there would a lot of people who wouldn’t be able to hold back unlike the murderous S-Rank-nim in front of me, so I was keeping my mouth shut.

If they didn’t touch me first, I would also be quiet.

“If I say there isn’t, would you believe me?”

“Ah right. You’re crazy guy 2’s hyung. I was wondering if you were naive unlike that guy, but that really was stupid. I’ll definitely remember.”

...Naive? Did I act in a way that made me look like that? The negotiations seemed like they ended well, though.

“.....I must have seemed like someone to take lightly.”

At my words, Moon Hyuna snorted.

“Of course I took you lightly. Just think, wasn’t a little F, who had just Awakened and hadn’t even stopped seeming like an ordinary person yet, saying Han Yoohyun, that person, was gentle? It’s the same as advertising ‘I’m a noob who doesn’t know anything about the Hunter community’.”

Ah, well it could seem like that too. Officially, I was a novice who hasn’t been Awakened for even one month. In actuality, I had the most Hunter work experience out of all of the people who had gathered there, but who would even guess that.

In the end, it would have seemed like a semi-ordinary person was saying ‘my younger brother is gentle’ with an ordinary person’s standards. Of course, past looking like someone to take lightly, they would have thought ‘wow an easygoing kid got a useful skill, should I try poking him~’.

Like Moon Hyuna just a while ago.

“No wonder, they weren’t people who would be so, but they were weirdly friendly.”

A sigh came out automatically.

“They wouldn’t all act annoying like Moon Hyuna-ssi, right?”

“Why ‘ssi’, making us feel distant; just call me noona.”

Moon Hyuna had regained her composure and she propped up her chin as she smiled brightly. ‘Noona’, yeah right. My mental age was thirty.

“I’m impatient because of the familiars. Though the rest wouldn’t not approach either. Do well, that dongsaeng with that hyung-nim[4].”

It looked like I shouldn’t take even one step out of the guild building for a while.

Moon Hyuna waved her hand. I felt the surrounding air tremble. Then the blocked off voices surged through.

“Ahjussi!”

Yerim ran over and slightly glared at Moon Hyuna.

“Did you not come here by promising to not touch him?”

Did she make that kind of promise. Then again, there was no way Yoohyun just gave an okay.

“Did I touch him? We just talked.”

Moon Hyuna said, lifting and showing both hands. She certainly didn't lay a hand on me.

“Ah, unni, really!”

“Oho, are you coming at me!”

Moon Hyuna shot up and abruptly pulled the fuming Yerim into her arms.

“My makeup will come off!”

“At your age, not putting any on is prettier~.”

Those two got along better than I had thought. What should I do if Yerim really went to Breaker after 3 years? That place would scatter in all directions in 4 years. Of course, there wasn't a way for the future to be exactly the same.

...Should I bring Moon Hyuna over instead?

She was a woman I didn't like, but it was a waste leaving a Hunter like her alone out of spite.

‘And it wouldn’t be that hard applying the keyword either.’

We were of different genders but the S-Rank who would come looking for me the most from now on was exactly Moon Hyuna. She had an immense interest in familiars so the probability was high that she would keep coming to find me and check while I was raising the monsters.

Even today, she purposely came to meet me.

So I thought it would be possible to slowly apply the keyword through joking love ballads and sufficient friendliness.

The problem was the keyword’s additional effect.

‘The probability of not having a person she thinks of as a caregiver would be low.’

Unlike Yoo Myeongwoo, who was left alone, Moon Hyuna was an athlete who had even entered world championships. She would’ve had the care of, of course her parents, but also managers or coach, special trainers, sunbaes, etc.

I would be thankful if the person was related to sports, and dad was fine, and mom was, well... I could deal with hearing ‘mom’ from Moon Hyuna. It would probably feel joking from

a woman older than me.

If I got her trust from the keyword's effect and nudged her enough when the problems within Breaker got bigger, I would be able to steal her away.

'I don't want to be close to her, but it wouldn't be bad to put her in Haeyeon. She was definitely competent and her general disposition fits well with Yerim.'

Current S-Rank dungeon attack teams were normally one S-Rank Hunter with the majority as A-Ranks, but later when the dungeon difficulty level increased, there were teams with two or more S-Ranks. Yoohyun's and Yerim's attributes were incompatible so they wouldn't be able to work as a team but Yerim and Moon Hyuna would work together well.

A powerful one-blow attack and a wide-range tool specialized in tying up opponents. On top of that, Yerim had a wide-range buff too.

If they cooperated, they would become a really good combo.

'Imagining it, I feel pretty drawn to it.'

That's right, at any rate she would be Yerim's partner, not mine. Let's call it properly playing the role of guardian and try hard to reel her in.

After deciding, seeing those two people playing was pleasing in its own way. Please get along well from now on as well.

The shooting finished smoothly.

There wasn't anything difficult either. It was just trivial content where I explained about Peace, exchanged Q&A, checked response time and pulling strength of his teeth from ball throwing, etc.

They asked me to show a cherishing and loving attitude toward Peace, but that was really easy. Since our Peace was lovable originally.

It was a relief that Peace was my brother's familiar; if I had to send him far away, I would have been too lonely. I could probably keep him when he wasn't doing dungeon attacks, right?

"Ahjussi, you're drinking mana potions again?"

After the shooting finished, I had put down Peace for a while and taken out a mana potion, when Yerim came towards me and asked.

"Should I give you one too? It's orange flavor."

“Only the smell is orange – there’s barely any sweetness and it’s tart. The apple flavor is bland and doesn’t taste good.”

It seemed okay to me. And you didn’t eat it for its taste.

When I opened the bottle cap and drank it in one gulp, Yerim sent me a worried gaze.

“Just today, it was three bottles – is it okay to just drink that much? There’s no recommended dosage?”

“What recommended dosage. It’s just to restore mental fatigue.”

Since I couldn’t say that my mana was low from using the Seed-Leaf skill.

Even though I searched to death, I didn’t see any status windows worth picking up. Since there were so many people, I just flipped through the letters[5], but whether it was skills or stats, the best were C-Rank.

‘The camera director could probably get what I’m seeing as a C-Rank special skill, but...’

The keyword application was one thing, but the optimization that I could only use once per

month was too precious. I didn't know when or where an A-Rank might pop up so I had to save it as much as possible.

Why were the Awakening Centers specialized for combat? Of course, there was no need to be dissatisfied with aptitude Awakening. Should I make a private Awakening Center instead? Since I could see the optimized initial skills, the conditions fitting each person... hm... that was also too troublesome.

"Ahjussi! Why are you blanking out again!"

Yerim yelled, jumping up.

"Saying it's for recovering mental fatigue, even after you drink it you blank out. You're not hurt anywhere? Always being tired, that, I heard it could be a serious illness..."

She was taken aback from what she herself said and even her complexion became pale. What serious illness. I was healthy even up to 5 years later.

"I was just thinking of something else for a bit. Peace, come here."

"But ahjussi is stat F! Shouldn't you go for a health checkup? When was the last time you had one?"

I mean, even though F-Ranks were weak, they were just ordinary people. Though compared to S-Ranks, they were a piece of paper.

"I don't remember but I'm fine. Hey, hey! Where are you calling!"

"Guild Leader. A general checkup, to make you get-."

"Don't! I'm really fine!"

I didn't want to go to a hospital! On top of that, if it was a general checkup, then I would have to get an endoscopy, so what would I do if I[6] said nonsense. You could do it awake instead of asleep, but that was hard.

"Kim Sunghan ahjussi also worries about ahjussi over anything; please take good care of your body."

Yerim complained, putting her cell phone back at my dissuasion. I mean, that was because that person thought of me as a seventy-year-old elder.

"Excuse me, can I take a picture with you?"

Just then, two pretty girls who looked like celebrities came towards us and asked. Both were FF.

“Yes, you can.”

“Can I touch him?”

“Just in case, you cannot.”

No matter how good and well-behaved Peace was, a monster was a monster. Even the broadcast shooting was possible because they got special approval from the Association and Hunters including Yerim and Moon Hyuna accompanied me; I couldn't take him outside by myself. It was still illegal.

Though it seemed like the law related to tamed monster accompaniment would change faster than it originally did, thanks to Peace.

“Can I also take a picture?”

Seeing the two girls take a picture, another person came over. Then the number of people nearby started to increase one by one.

These people wanted to take pictures but just gazed at us. I wouldn't be coming here again so I should just let them.

“Peace is really cute!”

“Are you on any social media?”

Social media, should I try it? I did have a few pictures and videos I took of Peace. Especially the pictures before growth were too good for only me to look at. He was cute now, but he was even cuter when he was small.

“I am not yet, but I will think about it.”

“Please definitely make one!”

Yes, yes. I definitely thought I should spread my kid’s cuteness far and wide.

Just then, people were talking noisily near the back of the crowd, when a man walked through as a space was formed. At the same time, of course mine and Yerim’s, but also the nearby people’s gazes were drawn to him.

Wow, really...

“Freaking good-looking.”

...Yerim. Please talk nicely. But he really was freaking good-looking.

And the possible Awakening stats were B, and skills were A.

[Unawakened Person – Bak Hayool

Possible Awakening stat rank B

Optimized Initial Skills

Can't Take Eyes Off(A)

Become Comfortable When Looking At(A)

The Icing On The Cake[7](A)]

The skills were triple A. And all of them had names that seemed like special skills. Not to mention... they seemed to be related to his appearance.

Was it because your face was also an aptitude? If you had that kind of face, even if you

Awakened with S-Rank stats, nothing might change. Stat compensation wasn't 'you become good-looking', but setting a balance, so there was a limit. If your facial features were already perfect, it couldn't add anything.

"Excuse me, could you give me your autograph!"

Bak Hayool blushed and said to Yerim. He was most likely a celebrity but his position was switched.

"...An autograph?"

"Yes! I really admire and like Hunters! This is my first time actually meeting an S-Rank Hunter, so when you were going to the Association to set your rank, I really wanted to go and see, but I could not, because of my schedule. But then I heard that you were shooting here so I came over really quickly!"

Bak Hayool couldn't hide his excitement and politely held out the autograph paper. There were kids like that occasionally. People who fantasized about Hunters and acted like fans chasing after celebrities. Especially since S-Ranks had amazing looks, as time went by, the fan base became bigger.

But it was ironic since a guy even better looking than an S-Rank was acting that way. On top of that, if he just Awakened, he would be B-Rank at minimum.

‘Though optimized Awakening would probably be impossible.’

Through the Awakening Center, he definitely wouldn’t get those skills. It seemed very likely he would become an half, with only the stat being B and the skills failing.

Even so, for me to reel him in was kind of a little... ambiguous. And I didn’t want to say the keyword to that face even if I died.

He was a celebrity with a good face so he would probably live well on his own. I should stop paying attention.

“I am in the middle of shooting a movie. If it is okay, could I send you a preview invitation? Of course, you do not have to come! Just, like a small present... I would like to send at least an invitation.....”

“Uh, yes. Please do. You can send it to Haeyeon Guild.”

“Thank you!”

It seemed like a serious illness. But, a movie shoot, he said. Unconsciously, I tilted my head.

I didn’t remember seeing such a good-looking actor. The me these days was far from a cultured life, so it was possible I didn’t see movies that were filmed now, but still, if it was

that face, he would have kept on appearing in various mediums after this. And it wasn't a face that was easy to forget.

But why wasn't he in my memories? Did he retire early?

"Han Yoojin-nim!"

Bak Hayool, who had gotten Yerim's autograph, now looked at me with an uncomfortable glint in his eyes.

"I would like to ask for your autograph! Could I possibly get Peace's footprint?"

"...Only the autograph is possible."

I quickly signed and sent him away. Since he was someone I wouldn't meet again.

[1] lit. 'that herbs/greens with/at/on that rice'. 나물 (nah-mul) isn't really herbs or greens but there's no eng word for it bc western ppl don't eat 나물 but anyways that's not really important

[2] I don't think I clarified last time but Icheon is a city in Gyeonggi Province/Gyeonggi-do

[3] lit. 'pupil(s) roll towards me'. Not exactly sure what it means but it sounds weird literally in eng so I did my best approximation. In a prev ch when it came up and later in this ch, I also tl'd it as 'eyes darting around' bc in context, it seemed to fit.

[4] a similar phrase came up in a prev ch, which I tl'd as 'like dongsaeng, like hyung' bc that's what it more or less means, but using that phrase would sound weird here so I left it literally

[5] he said 'alphabet' as in the eng word transliterated into krn but this is what I'm assuming he means

[6] no pronoun so idk if it's 'I' or 'they' but given context, I think he's worried abt sleeptalking abt his skills

[7] lit. sth like 'adding flowers to embroidery' but the meaning is the same as the eng 'the icing on the cake', or 'the cherry on top' or adding to something that already is beautiful/good/advantageous

Chapter 45: < It d Be Great If You Left Me Alone >

< It'd Be Great If You Left Me Alone >

[Why don't you come here to meet up already.]

When I got home, I sent a text to the Dokkaebi's contact information that I got from Suk Simyeong. They didn't take calls, only texts.

There wasn't a reply but after a short while, the Dokkaebi showed up midair. I knew that mask. I saw it in a Korean language textbook. It was definitely a Malddooki mask. Malddooki was... a role that made fun of and mocked the nobleman they were escorting. The Korean language teacher's impersonation of a Malddooki was so skilled that I remembered it.

...Was it on purpose? Hm?

"Oh, Boss Mr. Kim did you call for me? There was no news at all, so this dokkaebi had thought that the boss who could possibly die just from having his ankle grasped had left for that long road, the road to the afterlife, in the meantime, and was in the middle of putting a dried pollack head on an ancestral memorial table and sticking a spoon into a bowl of highly piled rice and bowing two times!"[1]

".....That's enough."

"Ah why didn't you follow my lead!"

Should I bring over a janggu[2] and hit it? I should quickly send them far away or something, it was too tiring to play with a three-year-old.

“No thanks, and I have something for you to do.”

“I’m a busy person! I won’t do something trivial!”

They sure were haughty for a subordinate. I took out a tablet I prepared beforehand.

“If you hear, you’ll probably change your mind?”

“You’re confident. Tell me!”

The Dokkaebi crossed their arms and nodded their head. Were you my boss?

“If you’re a subordinate, shouldn’t you be a little more polite?”

“Please tell me!”

“What you have to do is simple. Investigate foreign countries’ dungeons.”

“Dungeons?”

“That’s right. I put the details about the investigations in this tablet.”

I organized the items and investigation methods as I remembered them. First, after investigating all of the nearby Japan's dungeons, I could pass them to Suk Hayan and then supplement the lacking parts she pointed out.

"Normally, dungeons are so that foreigners can't approach. But you can hide and teleport, so you could easily investigate."

"Of course it's possible for me! But why do I have to do it?"

"If the laws of dungeon formation are discovered, you could lower the damage from breaks. Simply speaking, you could rescue many people. The great Dokkaebi-nim is doing hero-like work."

"I like that kind of thing!"

The Dokkaebi shouted, snatching away the tablet. They knew how to use it, right? Thankfully, the Dokkaebi skillfully flipped through the screen.

"But do I have to go to other countries? It's too far."

"If you secretly get on an airplane, you can get to Japan quickly. I will leave it to you, our[3] loving Yoon Yoon-nim."

The keyword had to be applied quickly so they could get the ultra-long distance portal skill.
At the word 'loving', the Dokkaebi hated it.

"That word again! I won't work then?!"

"Why do you hate the word 'love' when you're a dokkaebi? Dokkaebi are normally a kind that are full of love."

Dokkaebi turned into beautiful women and bewitched men or even coveted women.
Encyclopedia reference.

"...Really?"

"Of course. Real dokkaebi have to be used to love. I love you, Yoon Yoon. There, you try."

The Dokkaebi, who was hesitating, shouted loudly.

"I love you, Mr. Kim!"

"Good, you're doing well. I love you too, Yoon Yoon."

Since we did a love ballad face to face, I checked the skill window just in case, but the Dokkaebi's name wasn't there yet. Maybe because I didn't know much about the Dokkaebi's personal affairs, three to four times seemed to be too little. Should I count how many times it would take?

"Ughhhh, I'll go to Japan..."

"Have a safe trip. Be careful. Your safety is the most important. If you need anything, whatever it is, you can tell me any time. I love you."

The Dokkaebi abruptly disappeared.

Looking at the empty space, I sighed unconsciously.

'It should be done with this.'

I perched on the bed, before just flopping down.

Now all I needed to do was pass the data to Suk Hayan. If I let her research lab in my building, safety would be guaranteed and the government and particular guilds wouldn't interfere.

Unlike 5 years later, the information wouldn't become hidden or be monopolized.

'And there are familiars and Yoo Myeongwoo too. And I would make two originally A-Ranks into S-Ranks. If it's this much, didn't I do pretty much all I need to do?'

Now I didn't have anything I particularly needed to do besides raising the kids. Other than that, occasionally going around grabbing promising Unawakened People and causing them to Awaken?

Even if I said I knew future information, that didn't mean I knew about everything that went on in the world, and now a lot of things would change so it wouldn't be particularly useful.

If I've laid the groundwork about this much, everything would sort itself out better on its own.

Truthfully, I felt like I did too much. Once you start rolling, it's hard to stop – it was exactly that.

Still, now it really was the end. I guaranteed my safety, amply took care of my assets, and my originally already amazing brother would become even more amazing.

Once I finished raising Kim Sunghan and even pulled Moon Hyuna over safely, the number of S-Rank combat Hunters would be as much as four. And I would keep on reeling in and sending over promising looking combat or healer types, so becoming the country's number

1 would be a matter of time... hm. Then wouldn't I really have to go into Haeyeon? That was too bothersome.

I wanted to revoke the younger brother's discount and change the condition to the world's number 1.

'Still, my brother probably wouldn't just take advantage of me.'

Finishing with just putting my name forward.

Anyways, done for real. All done!

But just one thing,

'.....The guy who made the system is a problem, though.'

Still, they said the checking was done. Could it be really finished? I should have tried while I had the Dokkaebi over.

It was uncomfortable.

.....Shit, I don't know. I did everything I could. Wouldn't it be fine just filling up the standby

positions when I have time?

Just leave me alone so I can live peacefully raising monsters.

“Ahjussi, the advertisement is ending now!”

Yerim, who was sitting on the sofa holding a cushion, made a fuss. For reference, that sofa was number five. The four before it were commandeered[4] by the one rolling around on top of the table, Peace. An undisputed destruction king.

“I don’t particularly want to watch it.”

“Why? I even set up a recording before I came here.”

Why would you record it? ...Though I programmed a recording too. Since Peace showed up in it. Even if it was a little embarrassing looking at myself, I should save the parts with Peace.

When I went to the sofa and sat, Peace jumped into my lap as if he was waiting. Jump lightly. Think of your build.

-Geureureung

When I patted the head that was rubbing me, Yerim looked sideways at us.

“Did you know Peace is totally a pro at acting coy?”

“Acting coy?”

“When ahjussi isn’t here, far from swishing his tail, he completely ignores people. He doesn’t even pretend he didn’t see them.”

“Yerim, you annoyed him since you first met him. That’s enough for him to ignore you.”

At my words, Yerim had on an expression like she was wronged.

“It’s different from that. Oh, it’s playing.”

There was a short narration and Yerim was presented first. There was a caption saying she was the youngest S-Rank combat Hunter.

“It started already?”

Yoo Myeongwoo said, coming out holding snacks. I automatically straightened at the nutty[5] smell wafting to my nose.

“What is that?”

Yerim also showed interest and lowered the cushion she was holding. Yoo Myeongwoo lowered the dish he was holding in his hands onto the table.

“Fried scorched rice[6] and butter potato.”

Just hearing it, it sounded delicious. My and Yerim’s hands moved almost at the same time. Each of us took a piece of the scorched rice and brought it to our mouths.

Crunch

Wow... How was it so perfectly crunchy like this? The amount of dusted sugar was also superb. Rather than covering the nutty taste, the sweetness perfectly boosted it.

“Woah, what is this? What is it? Did you make it yourself?”

With wide eyes, Yerim stuck a fork into the butter potato. Maybe it wasn’t hot because she quickly put it in her mouth and chewed, before putting on a deeply moved expression.

“Myeongwoo oppa...!”

.....His title became ‘oppa’. Yerim, you punk, when was it when you ignored Myeongwoo, but with fried scorched rice and one potato, you get completely taken in?

Of course, it was tasty enough to get take... ahh, this potato was so good. It was enough to feel like it was a pity that Peace didn’t have any interest in anything other than magic stones and monster meat.

-Kkiang!

Just then, Peace cried toward the TV. When I lifted my head, I saw myself sitting on a chair holding Peace. Seeing my face on the screen was a little embarrass... wait, what was that caption.

“Ahjussi, look at your introductory phrase! It says monster’s dad~.”

Yerim smiled, clutching the scorched rice in both hands. Like she said, at the bottom of the screen, there was a caption saying ‘Monster’s dad Han Yoojin’.

Shit, I definitely said it was a magic beast rearing skill, a magic beast trainer, so why was it monster’s dad? It was a caption that seemed like it would end Those Things On Earth[7] or

Animal Farm with 'Peace, you have to listen well to dad~'.

Was it that kind of program? Why was it like that?

"Even appearing in a broadcast, impressive as expected."

Unlike the laughing Yerim, Myeongwoo was genuinely admiring. What 'impressive'. You would soon be able to show up in places like that too.

Just then, my cell phone rang. It was a call from a number I didn't know. Who was it?

"Hello."

[Yoojin! I just saw you on TV. Do you remember me? We worked at the factory together!]

I completely didn't remember. If it was when I was working at the factory, it was 4 years or so ago from now, but it felt like as much as 9 years ago. Would I have cause to remember?

"I am sorry, but I am not sure."

[Really? That's a little sad. Do you want to meet up? I have my own business lately; this is really an unbelievable item!]

Ah, it was that kind of call. Just when was it when I showed up on the broadcast – it sure was fast.

“Is that so? What kind of item is it?”

When I showed interest, they started to babble. Hm, it wasn’t very original. It wasn’t persuasive and they didn’t explain well.

“I am not particularly interested. I will decline.”

I ended the call and blocked the number. Yerim, who was watching me take the call, shook her head.

“Why did you answer? You should just hang up immediately. I actually changed my number. I even got calls from, not even the same class, but a nextdoor classmate’s parent’s in-laws’s relative. Ahjussi, change yours too.”

“I don’t plan on changing it for a while. It’s fun.”

“...It’s fun?”

“Yeah. I like getting spam calls. Especially creative ones.”

It was one of my few hobbies. The other person paid for the call, they worked hard to tell their story, and the service was friendly, how great was that? It was cost-effective leisure time where you could have fun just lying there still. The repertoire being too similar was the sole weak point.

“Oh, another one came.”

“.....Ahjussi.”

Yerim’s face looked dumbfounded. Myeongwoo also had a taken aback expression. Was it that weird?

“I mean, um... if there really is a good product, you could also make an investment.”

“Like that, you’ll fall for a scam. How about you find a different hobby?”

“Right, you could be misled and get into big trouble.”

These guys. It wasn’t for just one or two years that I had this hobby, and I knew a lot better

than you. Still, I felt awkward so I couldn't answer the phone and I put it on silent. With the value of familiars, the giant guilds making investments, and stories coming out that smelled of money, there should be calls coming from all sorts of places, though.

It should be fun for quite a while.

"Yaaawn."

I gave a long yawn and went out to the living room. There was someone who was really skilled with their words so while I was busy listening and chiming in agreeably, I went to sleep too late. If it was that kind of story with that proficiency in speaking, why didn't you aim for a broadcast appearance or put out a book, instead of trying to pull scams? It was a waste of talent.

'As if they would have one or two related skills if they Awakened optimally.'

Like, even if they fell in water, their tongue would float.

"Sorry I'm late. Were you very uncomfortable?"

When I opened the pen door, the waiting Peace quickly jumped out and rubbed his cheek on my leg.

-Geureureureu

“Right, right. Let’s eat and go out.”

We ate a partial breakfast that was also lunch and went outside. Peace, who had slipped from my arms, took the lead and trotted off.

Unlike before, there was security at the dorm floor’s elevator and stairs. They weren’t ordinary guards, but Hunters.

“Hello.”

I examined him as I greeted him. B-Rank, attack-related. Looking at the visitor’s pass around his neck, it seemed like he was sent from MKC.

Because it was decided that my protection would be a collaborative effort, each guild would rotate sending guards.

Yesterday was as much as an A-Rank from Breaker, but MKC was stingy. Of course, B-Rank wasn’t that low of a rank. The Breaker A-Rank had a good personality, unlike the guild leader. Despite being a high rank, they weren’t arrogant and was a kind beauty and had a lot of interest in familiars.

They were probably friendly because of the latter, but so what. Friendliness with ulterior motives was better than unfriendliness without.

“Will you be going down to the training room?”

“Yes.”

The B-Rank Hunter pressed the elevator button for me. It was treatment I couldn't even dream of before the regression. But, I was B-Rank now too, huh.

When the elevator arrived, Peace got on like he was used to it and jumped up to press the basement floor button. I didn't know whose kid he was but he sure was smart.

We arrived at the basement floor where the training rooms were, and got the key for the training room that Peace and I used exclusively from the maintenance room. Even if you said it was exclusive use, it wasn't to the point of calling it a special favor.

You couldn't use skills with killing power in the downtown area, so there was no reason for the overabundant training rooms to be completely filled up. If you were about B-Rank or higher, you used the training facilities in Gyeonggi-do if you could help it.

So, Haeyeon's basement training rooms were used more frequently by associate guild members, rather than Haeyeon Guild members.

Most giant guilds had several medium to small guilds under them. It was because mid to low rank dungeons needed to be managed over a certain rate, not just high rank dungeons.

Sending guild affiliated high rank Hunters to mid to low rank dungeon attacks was a waste of manpower. So, they relegated mid to low rank dungeon attacks to the associate medium to small guilds. In exchange, they became a reliable support and let the associate guilds use training rooms or facilities like the equipment management department.

Haeyeon also had several of those associate guilds.

‘Even up to 5 years later, they all didn’t cause any problems, right?’

I didn’t remember the matters of the medium to small guilds as well, but I thought it was so. Just seeing how the associate guilds were quiet, didn’t that mean Yoohyun was on the mild side for a guild leader? I, who had resented my brother even more for not having anything to find fault with for 5 years, could guarantee it.

He was the best out of the guild leaders.

[1] i’m sure it’s obvious through context but anyways this is what you do during ancestral memorial services during yearly celebrations, or for the (relatively recently) deceased family members (whom you knew) on the anniversary of their death

[2] an hourglass-shaped drum used often in krn folk music

[3] there is no 'our' or any possessive article, but leaving it out sounds weird in eng. Also, the phrase before that is lit. 'I request', i.e. like that polite phrase that's come up before, but I thought it would make more sense in eng like this.

[4] yj jokingly uses honorific speech here so I tried to get that through by using a fancy word

[5] not rly sure how to tl this. I could've used 'aromatic' or 'savory' but those didn't feel specific enough, so I checked the official def in the krn dict, which was 'a taste or smell like roasted sesame seeds, sesame oil, etc.' so I thought 'nutty' would be the closest eng equiv even if there aren't any actual nuts involved. The tastes/smells are similar enough

[6] 누룽지 (noo-roong-ji): scorched rice, a crust of overcooked rice that forms at the bottom of the pot when you make rice (not in a rice cooker). It can be eaten as a snack

[7] a krn program about weird/outrageous things on earth

Chapter 46: < Sometimes Getting Strong (1) >

< Sometimes Getting Strong (1) >

Deureureureuk

The sound of wheels rolling was heavy. Large luggage bags that were big enough to have room even with one person inside, were sitting on top of carts. Two people were pulling along one each.

The sounds of wheels hitting the floor stopped in front of a Haeyeon Guild security guard.

“It seems like there is a lot of just cargo today.”

At the security guard’s words, the vice guild leader of Haeyeon’s associate guild Bricks[1] smiled sheepishly.

“This time, quite a lot of bulky ones came out. Though the ranks were all low.”

Saying so, he opened the bag. It was full of trifling items like all sorts of weapons and armor, shoes, etc.

“They are these kinds of low rank products that are not much after you take out all of the commission fees and appraisal fees and such, so even if it is annoying, there is no choice but to check them.”

People would film directly wearing low rank items and testing them, instead of using an

appraisal statement. Direct dealings that didn't go through deals or the market were frequent.

So, they had packed up in this way in order to come use the training rooms where they could try using the items.

"You have worked hard. It would be good if there were a few more Hunters with item appraisal skills, but there are only two in the country."

"Even if there were more appraisers, it would be better to put in some work, even if to save mana potions."

The security guard checked the luggage and the Hunter licenses, and then handed out inventory sealing bracelets for each person.

"One C-Rank, two D-Ranks, one E-Rank. Since you are all C-Rank and lower, there are no other particular sanctions. Do you remember all the precautions?"

"Yes, of course."

"You may go in."

"Thank you."

The Bricks vice guild leader nodded his head in farewell.

Deureureureuk

The sounds of the wheels that had momentarily stopped, scraped the floor again.

“If they’re a security guard, they should be an Unawakened Person or at most around an E-Rank, but they’re pretty stuck up.”

One of the group that was going toward the elevator that went down to basement level, complained in a soft voice.

“At any rate, we won’t be coming back again. Stop paying attention to pointless things and focus.”

The vice guild leader wrinkled his forehead as he pressed the elevator button. Soon, along with a short alert, the elevator stopped, and the Bricks Guilds members walked forward, a little tense.

“Then, I will be waiting outside.”

The MKC guard said. I was a little sorry to make him stand outside, but even if your stats were C, your legs wouldn't hurt. Though it would probably be boring.

"Okay, Peace. What should we start with today?"

-Kkiang!

Peace turned in circles, excited. Seeing him so pleased with just coming to the training room, my heart hurt. I wanted to let him run and play in a larger environment. Not indoors, but outdoors.

"It'd be good if the law changes quickly."

Make it so you could take monsters outside. He was tamed and still just a C-Rank, so there shouldn't be anything dangerous with a B-Rank guardian.

-Kkyang! Kkeureung!

Peace held a knotted cord for a tugging game in his mouth and came toward me. Biting a cord I was holding and pulling and shaking it was Peace's favorite game. Though it was really tiring for me.

Still, once the other monsters came, this hardship would lessen a little. Except for when the

skill was applied and I was training them, they could play together.

“Wait a bit. Let me put on equipment.”

To play the tough tugging game, Strength stat was a must. I pulled out an A-Rank Black Pearl Spidersilk[2] fingerless gloves that increased Strength as much as 60, out of my inventory, and put them on. Just yesterday, I was provided with several types of integer increase equipment for training use.

The gloves gave enough strength to deal with Peace, so I put on just a Stamina increase bracelet and grabbed the loop at one end of the knotted cord.

-Keureung! Keureureu!

As soon as I grabbed the loop, Peace bit the opposite loop and excitedly started to leap around. The fluffy tail wagged about. The strength was so that it would have broken immediately if it wasn't a specially made cord.

Seeing things like this, he really was a monster.

‘Should I try taking him into a dungeon?’

If it was about F~E-Rank, it wouldn't be dangerous. Did Haeyeon have a low rank grassland

or lake environment dungeon?

The problem was that the person who made the system was worrying, if I took him. They could make a mistake again.

Should I wheedle Yoohyun into it, telling him to try working with the familiar, as an excuse? Would he have time? I could look at his skills too.

-Keuheung!

When I thought he was fired up enough, I let go of the loop. Holding the knotted cord in his mouth, Peace triumphantly ran one loop around the training room and then placed the cord at my feet.

“Having fun? Having fun?”

-Kkiang!

I embraced him who jumped into my arms, and roughly tousled his nape. That’s right, if you like it, so what if it’s a little tiring.

“Still, this time, let’s play with a ball.”

We should take breaks now and then. I went to the basket full of balls of different colors, materials, and shapes. It was just then.

Slam

The closed door opened and the MKC Hunter came inside. What was it?

“Did something happen?”

Instead of answering, he^[3] closed the door.

“...Seo Minsung-ssi?”

While I was thinking ‘I don’t have a good feeling about this’.

Paat!

A red powder was sprayed. A sweet odor and light sparkling, spreading through the air. Immediate effect sleeping powder that fetches five hundred^[4] per gram.

“Peace- uhk!”

I was grabbed from the back and gagged. A little bit away, I saw Peace, who had fallen asleep, collapsed down. I struggled in order to shake off the hand that was blocking my mouth and the arm around my hips, but they didn’t move one inch.

...The opponent was B-Rank, so no wonder. Even if I took out and wore all the equipment in my inventory, the result would be the same. Who knew if he was a level 1 who had just Awakened, but if he was good enough to be sent as a guard, his level should be high too.

‘Fuck, is MKC trying to betray us?’

That would be too risky, though. Just then, the closed door opened again and men came in pulling carts that had large bags on them.

One C-Rank, two D-Ranks, one E-Rank.

Seeing how they were calm even after seeing me caught, they weren’t Haeyeon Guild members. Since there were inventory sealing bracelets on their wrists, it was clear. Still, their ranks were too low to say that they were MKC people.

“Why is he fine?”

The C-Rank asked, suspicious.

“It didn’t work. It seems like Haeyeon gave him something like a detoxifying item.”

The MKC B-Rank said. The voice from above my head made me feel bad.

“If the Watchman’s Fruit doesn’t work, then it should be B-Rank at minimum. It seems like his brother got something good for him.”

That guy smirked. I suppressed the irritation welling up and tried to get a handle on things.

First, those guys and the MKC B-Rank were working together. If they were mid to low rank Hunters who had come into the training room carrying luggage and wearing inventory sealing bracelets, then it was highly likely that they were Haeyeon associate medium to small guild members.

In other words, MKC might not have anything to do with this situation, but they did something insane[5].

As a giant guild, fuck, they really were insane. They were told to send a guard, but they did shit like sending a spy.

‘For Seo Minsung, this bastard, it should be gambling or a bribe.’

There were only a few reasons an amazing giant guild affiliated B-Rank would do something like this. The crazy MKC bastards couldn’t even manage their guild members? You failed first because you were like this!

“Take the monster and check the item.”

At the C-Rank’s order, one of the D-Ranks came toward me. Seeing how he had absolutely no wariness, a sigh was about to escape my mouth. Someone who was even D-Rank was really, an idiot...

“Where’s the detoxifying ite-.”

Bam!

“Uhk!”

Watching the idiot who was kicked in the solar plexus roll on the floor, I lowered the foot that I had raised. The other D-Rank and the E-Rank, who were examining Peace, had alarmed faces.

“Wasn’t he stat F?!”

As expected, those guys were idiots too. Did you think I wouldn't have a lot of items with as much as five giant guilds at my back?

Still, maybe the C-Rank had a different amount of experience because he wasn't surprised.

"You stupid bastards, be quiet. It's been rumored that the Haeyeon Guild Leader cherishes his hyung, so would he just give one detoxifying item?"

I mean, to say it was to the extent of cherishing. As expected, rumors did get exaggerated. I was embarrassed.

"Fuck, this bastard!"

The idiot who was kicked by me, swore at me and then was told off for being noisy again. It would be okay if they were noisy some more. It was a training room so it was uselessly well soundproofed, damn.

The idiot carefully took off my gloves. Then my bracelet was taken away too.

In the meantime, a different idiot opened a bag they brought and dumped the things that were inside. Then, he put the sleeping Peace into a box inside the bag, closed the lid, and covered it with the items that he had taken out.

‘Shit, that would definitely not be caught and would pass through.’

It already would’ve been inspected before coming in, and simply one C-Rank with three D, E-Ranks were an insignificant number of people. There was barely any possibility of them being searched thoroughly until they left. It would probably be done with opening the bag once and looking it over with eyes only.

A way to make them get thoroughly searched...

“Is this the detoxifying item?”

Just then, the idiot stretched his hand toward my earlobe. Ack, wait. How many times did I use the Seed-Lead skill, again? The five guys here and one on my way to the training room by habit...

It was six times.

My Mana stat was still 2, unraised. The amount of time for my mana to recover hadn’t passed and half would get used up if I used the bait[6] skill just three times, oh crap. If the earrings were taken off, less than 10%...

‘I’m done for.’

The guy took off the Black Fairy's Earring, and with a killer headache, my vision grew blurred.

Splash!

"Pfft, what is that!"

Why was water-. Coughing, I tried to clean my face but my wrists were tied together to one place. They were cable ties. Though they were thick, it wasn't like they were zip-cuffs and they weren't unbreakable – they were looking down on me too much, even as a stat F-Rank.

Still, they had reliably put an inventory sealing bracelet on me.

"So you've finally awakened."

An unfamiliar face said, while looking down at me. I did have a lingering headache, but even if I passed out again, it would be better to figure out my situation first.

I raised my upper body, and used the Seed-Leaf skill towards the guy perched on a chair. Thankfully, a status window popped up without me losing consciousness.

Stat B-Rank, attack-type initial skills, Kim Woojae. It wasn't a name I remembered. If he was affiliated to the guild that kidnapped me, he should be the vice guild leader or guild leader.

I sat, leaning my back against the wall, and searched my surroundings. It was a normal office that wasn't that large. But it didn't have any windows. Was it the basement?

"Why didn't you use a stimulant instead of throwing water on me? It's not like it's the Middle Ages[7]."

There were a lot of good drugs made with dungeon byproducts. Though, of course, even if he had used a stimulant, it wouldn't have worked. Where was Peace? Did they confine him separately?

"Seeing how you're relaxed, it seems you trust someone will come save you, but it'll be good to give up."

That guy said, sneering.

"Aren't you the one who's too confident? Five guilds and even the Association will definitely interfere, but it seems like you can afford that."

There, hurry up and explain[8]. Traditionally, shouldn't desirable villains detailedly confess their plans from 1 to 10 in front of their incapacitated opponents?

“It’s a problem of time.”

Thankfully, that guy was a reliable villain.

“Seo Minsung, your guard, is still keeping guard in front of the training room. The fact that you’ve been kidnapped isn’t even known yet, so would anyone come to save you? By the time the disappearance of the magic beast trainer is found out, I would already be on a boat to Japan.”

“Japan? Are they the instigators?”

“They aren’t the instigators, but the auction venue. I put in a condition that I would get half the successful bid amount, as well as the guaranteed safety and support of course until I secure my place, from the guild or possibly the country that wins the auction, as long as I just safely pass you over.”

Ah, is that so. That was indeed quite good for you.

Japan, he said. Then again, you obviously couldn’t think of selling me off within the country, and the neighboring countries that you could get to by boat were Japan, China, or Russia. But, it would be precarious in various ways for the last two countries to open an auction, so the remaining choice was only Japan.

Could I be rescued before I was nicely packaged and placed in the auction house?

It would be easy to guess that he was going to escape to Japan, and thinking of my value, the coastal guards at least should be mobilized. So there was a possibility of being rescued as long as we didn't pass our waters, even if we got on a boat.

In other words, what I could do now was to stretch out the time as much as possible.

"Why did you wake me up? It'd be easier for you if I'm passed out."

"There's no difference whether a stat F is passed out or not."

It was even more irritating because it wasn't wrong. With my current stats, there was no possibility of me winning against a B-Rank even if I were born again. Even if I put on the equipment in my inventory, I wouldn't be a match against even a C-Rank.

"Then what, did you want to suddenly waste some water?"

Instead of answering, that guy quietly stared at me. What, huh, what?

"I wonder if you've given up, or if you're being brazen."

It was a face that said my being too calm was unpleasant. I had Fear Resistance(L), so it was indeed legendary rank nerves. But what were you going to do after threatening a poor kidnapped stat F-Rank?

“Your face and mind seem pretty similar.”

“...What?”

“I can’t bear to look at either.”

Bam!

That guy kicked the desk. As the iron legs dented, the junk on top of the tilting desk slid and fell to the floor.

“Anyways, ignorant people really do brag about their strength.”

“So it’s that you’re brazen.”

That guy kicked his chair and stood up. Are you angry? Mad? I don’t think you’re pissed off enough.

I smiled as if I heard a joke that wasn't funny.

"If the round thing sitting between your shoulders isn't just decoration, then shouldn't you know at least that there's no need for me to be intimidated? If it is decoration, then sorry. Actually, it's too dirty to put up as decoration. Even so, saying that the function is good is-."

Puuk!

...My stomach was kicked hard. Ah, fuck. It hurts. I couldn't even make a sound.

"Messing around without understanding your position."

"I know, cough, my position pretty well. The special skill holder that any guild in, of course the country, but also the world, all want to take in. Even if there was a truckload of, fuck, dime-a-dozen B-Rank combat Hunters[9], the comparison, ack!"

That guy stomped on my ankle like he was going to crush it. Shit, don't crush it, just cut it off. You couldn't drag the time on by crushing it.

For small guilds, there wouldn't be high rank potions, which had difficult supply and demand, much less a decent healer, and if I acted like I would die from excessive bleeding, they would have no choice but to take me to a hospital.

Of course, there would be the choice of letting me die, but then that bastard would die too. Whether finding a boat to go all the way to Japan or handling the auction, a small guild wouldn't have done all of it, and there should be people providing support. Like, the auction house that would take the remaining half of the successful bid, or the foreign giant guilds waiting anxiously for the goods to appear.

If something went wrong with me, of course this bastard, but even the other people involved would all be unable to set foot anywhere, whether home or abroad. Exactly how many S-Ranks enraged at losing the chance to get high rank familiars would there be?

In that case, it would be better for him to push one of his henchmen forward and put the blame on them and get them to turn themselves in.

'Should I try faking an internal injury from getting hit in the stomach?'

He would notice me biting my tongue and spitting out blood. I was wondering if there was a way to fake illness enough to trick a B-Rank, or if I had to make him even more furious, when a rough hand grabbed me by the hair.

"Ugh..."

"That's right, Han Yoojin. You're a piece of treasure that a common B-Rank combat Hunter can't compare to. Who would dare to harm that precious body? You should be

self-confident.”

...His voice was pissed off, but the tone was calm. I was confused whether I could provoke him more or not.

“So I’ll introduce you to a good friend. You’ll have a fun time.”

Crash!

“...Ughh.”

He was just carelessly throwing people.

The place that guy dragged me to was a tightly closed space that was similar to a dark warehouse. A hazy light was spilling down from a light on the ceiling. And I saw a steel-barred opening^[10] on the wall opposite to the door.

Um... It felt like there would be something inside of there.

“The Krecke^[11] has a habit of storing away food when it’s full.”

Krecke? Was it a monster? It was a name I hadn’t heard of before. That guy’s mug became

arrogant as he continued explaining.

“That storage method is a curse that makes your entire body stiff and makes you feel pain. No matter how strong of a guy you are, after 30 minutes, you’ll beg that you’ll do anything to be let out.”

That guy laughed insidiously. A curse? If it was a curse, then it was welcome.

“30 minutes? Would it work with just that much? Why don’t you use more?”

It was good for me the longer time was dragged on. But that asshole just smirked, went outside, and locked the door.

Then, the steel bars rose up, and something black crawled out.

A giant reptile that was slightly longer than a person’s height, and had gloopy skin that was like it was covered in mud. It looked similar to a salamander, but it had six legs and on its back, there were things like sea anemone tentacles wavering like smoke.

‘For the curse, I have the resistance skill so it’s not a problem, but.....’

It looked really disgusting. Ack, don’t come, go away. Just then, the reptile that was slowly crawling towards me suddenly stopped a couple steps away. The chain connected to its

collar was stretched taut.

And,

[While against the Krecke, all skill effects are increased by 2 times!]

A message window popped up. Hm?

‘...Is it the Lauchtas’ Natural Enemy skill?’

So that black and disgusting reptile was a curse and poison dragon type. But even if my skill effects were twice as much, I didn’t... have a single combat skill. Even if the Agility and Mental Up were twice as much, there wouldn’t be much of a change. Other than that.....

Ah.

‘Would the keyword application be received twice, too?’

First of all, since it was related to a skill, if it was two times faster and easier to be applied, I could use that reptile. Trying wouldn’t hurt, so let’s make an attempt.

‘Ack!’

When I tried to stand up, a sharp pain came from my ankle that was stepped on. It seemed like it wasn't broken, but would it be fractured? It wasn't to the point of being unable to move, so I grabbed the wall and stumbled up. Then.

Sasasasak!

The black reptile backed away, startled. Huh? Why was it doing that?

The thing with its eyes opened wide and gasping from its bulging neck... no matter how you looked at it, it seemed like it was frightened. But I was stat F-Rank.

'.....Is it because of the Dragon Slayer title?'

It was a title that was received after getting rid of, not any other monster, but the king of curse and poison dragons, by myself. There was no effect in the last dungeon, but it seemed like it influenced similar curse and poison dragon types.

At any rate, there wasn't anything bad about frightening it a little. It would be easier to approach and there was such a thing as a suspension bridge effect.

I took out a bottle with magic stone powder from my inventory, and gave a warm smile to the reptile hunched over.

“Here, Blackie. You’re a good boy, right? Do you want to eat something tasty?”

They’re C-Rank magic stones grinded finely so they’re even easy to swallow. Come here.

[1] it’s a transliterated word so I suppose it could also be something like ‘briggs’ or ‘brix’

[2] idk if it’s a name but it seems like it’s a name so I capitalized just in case

[3] i’ve been using ‘they’ whenever eng required pronouns but it’s not specified in krn, but in this case, it says ‘he’, so I went back and changed ‘them’ to ‘he’ for this particular person. anyways just letting you guys know that I’m defaulting to ‘they’ unless otherwise specified

[4] as 500 won is roughly 50 cents (usd), I’m assuming he means 5 mil won, which is roughly 5000 usd

[5] this and the ‘crazy’ or ‘insane’ used several times afterwards is that ableist word from ch. 21 (footnote [1]), in this case, meaning something wild/crazy/fucked up, so the best eng equiv would be r*tarded, but I didn’t want to put that in, so it’s here in a footnote.

[6] so seed-leaf is 떡잎 (dduk-eeop) and this word (a type of fishing bait, rice used to make rice cakes, or metaphorically used to mean ‘(media) spoilers’ or ‘(movie, etc.) teasers’ or ‘foreshadowing’) is 떡밥 (dduk-bap). I don’t really get this part and why the author is saying

떡밥, but here are the definitions so y'all can try to figure it out yourselves.

[7] lit. '1955 Namsan Mountain'. Idk why the Namsan is there but my dad says maybe it's to represent Seoul (like how the Eiffel Tower represents Paris), but the word used for 1955 is lit. 'double 8 year period' and it's referring to 단기 4288 (which is 1955 a.d.) where 단기 is a way of counting years like a.d./b.c. but 단기 starts from when kr is said to have begun in legends (2333 b.c.). Thus, the year is also used to represent an old style time period, so basically yj is saying 'it's not a long time ago', which can be analogously expressed w 'the Middle Ages' in eng.

[8] lit. 'become an explaining-bug' where '-bug' is used to mean, in a negative way, 'sb who does sth (whatever was in front of 'bug') excessively'.

[9] lit. sth like '...B-Rank Hunters were presented/brought in/through truck' which is a common way of expression there is a lot of sth

[10] the word is actually 'steel-barred window' but in this case, it seems to be more like a door/entrance so I tweaked it a little

[11] keu-reh-keh

Chapter 47: < Sometimes Getting Strong (2) >

< Sometimes Getting Strong (2) >

Kim Woojae walked around restlessly.

‘Why isn’t there any contact from Seo Minsung, that bastard.’

They had agreed to signal that there wasn’t a problem every 20 minutes. But the signal that should have come five minutes ago, didn’t come.

Did he already get caught?

‘Shit, I have to get the owner’s token at least.’

Kim Woojae had purposely woken Han Yoojin and threatened him for no other than the baby Horned Flame Lion’s taming item, the owner’s token. If he got on the boat with the token still in Han Yoojin’s inventory, then he would no longer be able to lay a hand on him. But if he pocketed it ahead of time, he could definitely take away a share through the token as well.

It was as much as an S-Rank dungeon boss monster’s baby. He would be able to get additional money even if he passed them over together like this, but if he took the taming’s token, he would be able to sell it at an even more expensive price. The value was too much to turn away from, pretending he didn’t see.

'If I threaten him saying that I would leave him with the curse for one more hour, hiding the fact that there isn't time...'

Wouldn't he hand it over obediently? Since he acted so spirited, Han Yoojin was the same as an ordinary person with barely any dungeon experience. It was obvious that he would be dazed from being caught in a curse for the first time.

Bam!

"Did you have a good time!"

Kim Woojae purposely shouted cheerfully and slammed the door open. He saw Han Yoojin, collapsed and huddled near the wall. He should have heard the noise but there was no movement.

It should be a curse where you couldn't even faint, though. Did he lose even the energy to flinch?

Kim Woojae didn't think much of it and went toward Han Yoojin. Then, he kicked the huddled back.

"I know you're awak-."

Just then,

Swish!

“Uck!”

Black tentacles shot out and wound around Kim Woojae’s ankle. At the poison melting and permeating through his socks, Kim Woojae was startled and pulled his leg back with all his strength.

Ddook!

The tentacles were cut off, and Kim Woojae stumbled. He hurriedly turned around and was met with the sight of a giant reptile shaking its tentacles.

“The leash distance definitely was-!”

-Kkooooeueu!

The Krecke heaved its body and ran toward Kim Woojae. He saw the chain that should be connected to the collar tumbling around.

At the feeling of the poison coming over, Kim Woojae hurriedly took a shield out of his inventory. It was just then.

Kwadeuk!

“Urgh!”

A knife sunk into Kim Woojae’s ankle. Specifically, it was the part that was weakened by the poison. At the same time, the Krecke crashed into the shield with its body.

“Argh!”

It was a surprise attack he couldn’t have predicted, but he was still a B-Rank Hunter with a lot of experience, so Kim Woojae didn’t helplessly collapse, and instead, quickly rolled to the side and increased the distance.

“These fucking things!”

Kim Woojae shouted, veins bulging out of his neck.

He had noticed Han Yoojin moving. But he hadn’t even dreamt of a stat F-Rank with a sealed inventory and no attack skills coming at him.

“Even so, a simple C-Rank dungeon monster is!”

He had been hurt considerably, but even so, it was a combination of a C-Rank and a stat F-Rank. Even if his leg had been cut off, he wouldn't lose.

Kim Woojae took out a great sword. Then a skill was used and in a blink, the thick black skin was cut under the blade.

-Kkooooeu

Along with the listless moan, the black reptile's body slumped over. Kim Woojae spat out a breath full of anger and turned to look at the blankly sitting Han Yoojin.

With his temper, he felt like he would slice up that bastard so he put his weapon into his inventory.

“Shit, this bastard! That you could only grow tamed baby monsters-.”

Even if he was a valuable good, he only needed to be alive. Just when Kim Woojae was growling about doing his best to break Han Yoojin's limbs,

“Urgh!”

Along with a severe pain that beat into his entire body, Kim Woojae fell forward onto his face.

-Kkooooeu

Blackie was convulsing in its death throes.

There was an anticipation just in case, but as expected, it became like this.

And then soon.

[The effect of the title ‘Perfect Caregiver’ will be displayed.

Caregiver Supplementary Skill – Last Repayment

The skills and abilities of monster ‘Blackie’ will double in efficiency.

Duration time – 168:00]

The message window informing me of the skill's application popped up. Continuing.

[Last Repayment(L) skill effect is doubled.]

The Lauchtas' Natural Enemy skill application message window appeared as well. Before I could properly read those, Blackie's memories were conveyed over.

Same as the Last Repayment I had before, they were memories related to me.

A very short memory, that didn't even reach a mere 30 minutes.

Blackie was afraid of me, felt curiosity, and was happy with the C-Rank magic stone powder it ate for the first time.

That guy liked my voice that was telling it that I love it. It thought my hands were warm. It instinctively felt that it couldn't win against Kim Woojae, but it wanted to protect me.

It worried about me to the end.

Really, this was a skill that was better off not being able to be used.

“...Sorry, Blackie.”

I mumbled a pointless apology, and opened the status window. The clearly increased stats as well as the newly appeared skills were visible.

“Shit, this bastard! That you could only grow tamed baby monsters-.”

I used Thorn Trap on Kim Woojae, whose face was extremely contorted.

“Urgh!”

Along with the strangled breath, the collapsed guy convulsed on the ground.

Thorn Trap(D). A curse skill that restrains and gives pain to the opponent. But, if the Mental stat rank was two levels higher than the skill rank, it wouldn't work.

Originally, it was a skill that wouldn't be any use against B-Rank Kim Woojae, but right now, it had a doubling and then doubling again buff, so it should be about the level of a B-Rank skill.

‘The amount of transferred memories were so few, so it seems like it'll take a bit to adjust.’

The more memories the other person had about me, the faster the adjustment to the transferred stats and skills were. So in the case of Yoohyun, I was able to use them skillfully as if I was Yoohyun himself.

Still, the skill effect was doubled so it seemed like quite a lot of information came over even for thirty minutes.

I closed the status window and moved my gaze to the collapsed body.

“...I really do dislike this skill.”

I swallowed a sigh and went to Blackie. The skin that I placed my hand on felt even colder, maybe because of the mood.

Thanks to the Mental stat doubling buff, it was skill I was able to bear, but even after getting the doubling and then doubling again buff, the mood was really depressing.

‘Our Blackie... it seems like the Mental stat was pretty low.’

Still, Last Repayment thankfully lasted for 7 days; the effect ended with only 1 hour for Last Repayment[1]. Thanks to that, there was a time when I spent a few days heavily drinking.

I raised my body and went to Kim Woojae, who was convulsing with his body stiffly frozen.

With his eyes darting around and glaring at me, it seemed like he was still fine[2].

“There probably isn’t any reason to let you live, right?”

More than anything, I had to block his mouth so that the Last Repayment skill wouldn’t be discovered. I could shut him up by writing up a contract, but did I need to do that much?

“Ah, my ankle hurts.”

Thanks to the stats rising, it wasn’t to the point of not being able to walk, but it did hurt. Grumbling, I opened the status window again and checked the skills I got from Blackie.

[Thorn Trap(D) – A curse that paralyzes and gives pain to the opponent

Duration time 1 hour]

[Sticky Poison(C) – A powerful poison that seeps out of the skin]

[Lizard Stuck to the Wall(D) – Assimilate to the surrounding environment and hide appearance]

[Clawing(D) – Powerful claw attack]

[Stretching Tentacles(C) – Stretching tentacles that carry poison

Maximum distance 1 meter]

[The Weak's Premonition(C) – Detect opponents stronger than oneself]

Skin poison, clawing, tentacles... Putting aside the first two, could I be able to use the tentacles? It was originally a skill that stretched out and swung around tentacles on your back.

It wasn't that there wasn't a part that stretched out from my body, but, hm. If the maximum distance was 1 meter, then since it was four times, it would be 4 meters, hm.

...I was curious.

‘...Should I try using it a little bit.’

Just slightly. Stretching tentacles.

“.....Ugh.”

When I used the skill, tentacles sprouted from my wrist. Unlike my skin color, they were black and it seemed like a parasite was stuck on.

If they were poisonous tentacles that stretched to 4 meters, they were indeed useful, but I felt a physiological repulsion.

‘The strongest one out of the skills should definitely be Sticky Poison.’

It was C-Rank poison that had a quadrupling buff. Even a fairly good A-Rank would have a hard time blocking it. Wouldn't it be able to poison even S-Ranks who didn't have poison resistance related equipment? Though of course, even A-Ranks, not to mention S-Ranks, would probably have poison and curse resistance items by standard.

“Kim Woojae-ssi. I will go find my kid and come back, so please obediently stay here.”

I wondered if I should kill him right away, but to prepare just in case I couldn't find Peace, I decided to let him live. According to him, a normal person would do anything after 30 minutes, so if it was four times that, even if it he was a B-Rank, he would probably become obedient.

I searched him and found the key to the inventory sealing bracelet. After taking off the bracelet on my wrist, I put it on his. Then, I took off his gloves and put them on. It would

become bothersome if I left fingerprints.

“Then, have a good time.”

I tossed a goodbye and then went outside and locked the door.

I wondered how many people there were in this building. It was a little regretful that The Weak's Premonition would only sense strong opponents. Normally, the radius wasn't much, but right now it was pretty wide. It meant I wouldn't suddenly meet an A-Rank or higher and be taken aback.

Though there wouldn't be an A-Rank in this kind of place.

‘Even if there is an A-Rank, I think if I use Lizard Stuck to the Wall and take them by surprise with posion, I could probably deal with them.’

Right now my stats were at the level of being a level 50 between A-Rank and B-Rank. B-Ranks were easy[3] but A-Ranks were a little difficult. Still, the skills were quite good so...

Crack!

“Oops.”

While opening a closed door, I broke off the doorknob. I had to quickly get adapted; like this, it would be exposed that my stats increased.

‘To think I have to hide it for 7 days from now on.’

It was a relief there wasn’t a status window appraiser at Haeyeon. Should I shut myself in my room for a week with the excuse of the aftermath of being kidnapped? If I slightly used Lizard Stuck to the Wall and made my presence weak, it didn’t seem like a big issue would occur.

Why wasn’t it one day; the time period was too long, so even that was a problem.

‘How should I explain it if I get caught?’

If I was like ‘a passing Hunter saved me and gave me an amazing buff~’, not even a passing dog would believe me, probably. There wasn’t a good excuse. There was no choice but to just insist ‘it’s a mistake, you are misunderstanding, I’m weak!’.

‘Found it.’

I felt the presence of, not Peace, but of people gathered around. Seeing how The Weak’s Premonition skill was quiet, they were all B-Rank or lower.

‘Lizard Stuck on the Wall.’

Originally, it was skill that only had an effect of giving you protective coloring. But now with the quadrupling buff, I wouldn’t normally be discovered.

If I wasn’t going to kill people every time I met them, I couldn’t be discovered.

I quietly went toward the place where I felt the presence of people. Thankfully, the door was about halfway opened.

“We’ll probably really be able to escape safely, right?”

Across the door, a voice spilled out. It was a voice I remembered.

‘It’s the D-Rank who was kicked by me.’

When I peeked through the gap in the door, the four people I saw in the training room were all gathered together. I just didn’t see the one C-Rank.

Instead of dragging it out, I immediately used Thorn Trap.

“Ack!”

“What – argh!”

Those guys fell down like dominoes. Maybe because their stats were low, they went past trembling to their eyes bulging out.

‘It really is great having an attack skill.’

If only I could exchange just one of my L-Rank skills for an attack type or defense type.

Just in case they would see me, I stealthily turned over the bodies laid out on the ground and searched the room. The wall was clustered with monitors and they were showing images from security cameras.

It seemed like there weren’t any security cameras except at the entrance, stairs, and part of the hallway. After unplugging all of them, I took the cluster of keys hanging on the wall and went back outside again.

When I left the basement and went up to the 1st floor, I saw a cage where Peace was locked in.

‘Peace!’

In case someone would come in, I couldn’t shout, and I searched the surroundings as I went toward the cage. The body covered in red fur went up and down regularly. It seemed like he wasn’t hurt anywhere, and like he didn’t wake up yet.

‘There weren’t any side effects to the Watchman’s Fruit, right?’

That disgustingly expensive powder was usually used to capture monsters. That was because it only affected C-Ranks and lower, so using it in dungeon attacks didn’t pay off. Of course, it worked on people too, so there was a time when even I fell asleep while doing a job helping capture monsters.

‘It looks like the cage key isn’t here.’

Though it would be weird to put them together. The keys I brought with me also didn’t fit. It wasn’t like I couldn’t break the cage, but I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to adjust my strength well. And it was a little much to melt it by poison. The defenselessly sleeping Peace could get hurt, so it would probably be better to find the key.

“Just wait a little longer.”

I’ll come back soon.

I couldn't rummage around all over the place to find one small key. I wondered if I should go back down to the basement and grab one of the collapsed guys to ask, but went to the upper floor first. It was better to completely get rid of the uneasiness from 'just in case'.

Thankfully, the building was 2-storied, and in the 2nd floor, there was only one place where I felt the presence of a person. It was probably the remaining C-Rank.

'Even for a giant guild's associate, the number is small.'

It seemed like only a part of the people were participating in this matter. Well, in addition to the security problem, they would have to leave Korea, so probably only the minimum number of people who could be trusted were gathered.

'The B-Rank should be the guild leader, and the C-Rank is probably the vice guild leader.'

If it was the vice guild leader, he would probably know where the key was.

I glared at the shut door and then,

Bam!

I kicked it, breaking it open.

“Wh-who are you!”

Who else?

“I am the victim whom you have kidnapped.”

[1] his prev skill. See ch 4 footnote [19] for the difference bw the two

[2] lit. sth like ‘he felt it was worthy enough to live’ but I think in this context, this is what it means

[3] lit. ‘gum’ as in chewing gum, and I couldn’t find anything about it in dict, but from example tls I found, I think saying sth is gum is slang for saying it’s easy/nothing

Chapter 48: < Sometimes Getting Strong (3) >

< Sometimes Getting Strong (3) >

C-Rank defense Hunter Bak Sanghoon. He sharply raised his eyes at me when he saw me.

“How-!”

“Where’s the key to the Horned Flame Lion’s cage?”

Bak Sanghoon had a taken aback expression, before smirking.

“Huh, a little stat F got lucky and got loose, but didn’t think to run away, and came crawling here? Seeing how the inventory sealing bracelet isn’t there, it seems like you used an item, but no matter how good of an equipment an F-Rank puts on, it doesn’t work on a C-Rank. Then again, would a newbie who hasn’t even properly been to a dungeon know that?”

That guy leisurely stood from his seat and said. It was an attitude that was confident that he would easily grab me even if I turned around and ran.

“I said, where’s the key to the Horned Flame Lion’s cage?”

“He’s taking care of it like it’s his own brat. It’s in my inventory. What are you going to do?”

He snickered, asking if I would come at him.

If it was in his inventory, then it was probably a key made from dungeon metal. It looked

like it would get annoying.

The inventory was a space that others couldn't intrude into. To take something out from there, you could only rely on the owner's will.

"First, why don't we talk after you take out the key, let's?"

"And why should I do that?"

The expression looking down on me and ridiculing me, was offensive. It didn't seem like he would obediently hand it over, so let's hit him a little.

Jjak!

"Urk?!"

I swung the tentacles and hit his cheek hard. I didn't put poison, so he wasn't poisoned, but instead, a bright red line mark was left. Bak Sunghoon was confused and raised his hand to place it on his cheek.

"J-just then, what..."

Did you not see? Then, I'll hit you again, for you.

Jjaak!

"Ack!"

To be fair, I hit the opposite cheek hard. Thanks to putting in more strength this time, that guy's head was smacked to the side.

It was an expression that said he still didn't know what was going on, but it seemed like he understood it was something I did.

"...Is it an item?"

"It's not."

"Th-then..."

What else would it be, it was a skill. I raised my middle finger toward that guy. Then.

'Thorn Trap.'

“Urghh!”

With a clatter, the chair was hit and fell, and Bak Sunghoon fell down as well and flailed around[1] like a reeled fish.

Blackie, your skills really were nice. Even Tenacles, if you bore it being disgusting, it was really useful. If it wasn't limited to 7 days, I'd be able to use it well even in everyday life. Like bringing over a remote far from where I'm lying on the couch, or opening the fridge door without needing to go all the way to the kitchen.

...Our poor Blackie.

I let out a sigh and went toward the trembling Bak Sunghoon. When I kicked at him, he looked up at me with eyes brimming with tears. Ugh... his eyes were gross.

‘Cancel Thorn Trap.’

Along with the skill cancellation, the convulsing body stopped moving. Bak Sunghoon twisted his upper body and,

“Arghh!”

With the shriek, he lunged at me with his spit flowing. Ugh, nasty. Looking at his face, I didn't want to touch him even with my foot, so I lightly dodged to the side.

Bam!

An iron locker dented and through a crack in the hanging door, papers spilled out. Bak Sunghoon quickly raised the locker up high and threw it towards me.

Thump thump!

"Just break it all, why don't you."

While I was stepping back a few steps, that guy had taken out a weapon and armor.

"It looks like you had a skill you were hiding, but still, you don't even have combat experie-."

Ah enough, Thorn Trap.

"Urgh!"

Bak Sunghoon fell forward and thrashed around again. It looked like the curse resistance stuck to the armor was low.

“If you obediently hand over the key, I’ll spare your life.”

Of course, I didn’t actually intend to spare it.

When I lifted Thorn Trap again, Bak Sunghoon swayed and raised his body. His dirty face was full of resentment.

“.....Fuck, just why did we capture you.”

“Don’t need to know that. And that just now isn’t the only skill I have, you know?”

I took off the gloves and took a pen that was on the desk. When I used Sticky Poison on my fingertips, it started to melt black. When I shook off the poison and the melted pen, jet black holes appeared where each drop fell. The smouldering along with the foul odor made quite a terrifying scene.

“Do you want to hand over the key, or do you want to slowly melt starting from your toes?”

Fear finally started to show on Bak Sunghoon’s face.

"I-I will give it to you. If you would just write a contract..."

"Of course."

It was highly likely it would be an illegal contract.

As expected, the contract that guy took out of his inventory didn't have anything like an Association certification. Even the curse on it wasn't skill sealing or stat decrease for a specified time, but a permanent vision impairment.

"I will hand over the key with the condition that my safety is guaranteed."

"What safety guarantee. Don't write something vague and properly meet the conditions. I won't attack you for 24 hours from now. Run away on your own. Instead, take out the key to the Horned Flame Lion's cage from your inventory and don't let information about me leave your mouth for the rest of your life."

It didn't matter if it was written roughly, but just in case he would get suspicious, I demanded specific conditions. Bak Sunghoon wrote down the conditions with a more relieved expression. That guy signed first and then I did too.

"Here's the key."

That guy just trusted the contract and threw the key at me. He was even being short with his words[2]. First, I put the key into my inventory and shook the contract at him.

“I’m really sorry to crush your hopes.”

I grabbed both sides of the parchment and slowly twisted them.

“One of my hobbies is to rip contracts.”

I felt a slight resistance. But there was no way there existed a contract that could oppose as much as an L-Rank Curse Resistance.

The curse in the contract soon disappeared like a bubble. The normal parchment was cut across. Then, I completely vanished it by melting it with poison.

“Now your turn.”

I wanted to nicely leave his body for him at least, but there was a young lady who could read a corpse’s memories.

After taking care of Bak Sunghoon, I went back to the room that Kim Woojae was in.

“Ugh, the smell.”

It seems like this bastard wet his pants. Tears and snot, and even spit, were flowing but his eyes were still sharp and they glared at me.

“Looking at you, it looks like you won’t open your mouth to the end.”

I didn’t really need him much longer. If I interrogated him about the specific mastermind and the people coming to save me showed up, it would be difficult, so should I end it around now? There were still four people left and there would be something like physical evidence somewhere in this building, so other people could take care of the rest.

I took off the inventory sealing bracelet that I had put on him and put it on my wrist again.

I didn’t want blood to splatter so I took off the gloves and let the poison liquid drip onto Kim Woojae’s face.

“Argh, ugh!”

Maybe because of Thorn Trap, he couldn’t even properly scream. It wasn’t long before even that stopped. His head had dissolved from the poison and was disappearing, and continuing, even his upper body spread out like black goo.

Yerim's White Corpse could only be used if 2/3 or more of the corpse was remaining. If it was this much, she wouldn't be able to take out Kim Woojae's memories.

'If someone sees this, they'll probably think a Hunter with poison and curse skills perpetrated this.'

Wouldn't they guess that an internal conflict occurred?

Seeing the messed up corpse, I had a bit of a bitter taste in my mouth.

'I had thought that I wouldn't need to do something like murder, this time around.'

I had already killed two people. Though it was the fault of the people who kidnapped me. So why did you disturb a person who was trying to live peacefully? Just leave me alone.

"...It's making me feel upset in various ways."

I turned my head and looked at Blackie's corpse. If other people noticed it, it would be collected and used for materials. A dragon type's corpse had many uses. I didn't really feel up to leaving it alone so that that would happen.

In the meantime, I dissolved Blackie's hardened body with the poison. As a poison dragon, it had a stronger resistance than B-Rank Kim Woojae, but it couldn't hold out for that long.

In middle of the small poison swamp created so, a stone like a red gem was left remaining.

It was a magic stone.

I looked at it for a short while, and then picked it up and took out the empty magic stone powder bottle to put it inside.

I had finished what I needed to do, and so I went back to where Peace was.

For the remaining four people, I just put on the curse and left them alone. It wasn't like they saw me, and they weren't the leaders either.

Of course, those guys weren't blameless either. Putting aside the kidnapping matter, if they were guys trusted by the guild leader of a guild that raised a monster for the purpose of putting a severe curse on people who didn't listen to them, one or two crimes probably were trivial for them.

Still, if I just left them restrained, the people coming to save me would discover them and handle them on their own.

“Peace, are you still sleeping?”

I opened the cage with the key and went inside. It was a large cage where I couldn’t touch the top with my head even while standing.

Escaping would be suspicious and there was a large possibility of being met with a barrage of questions, so if I was shut up here with Peace, people would probably come to save us.

I did have worries that wrong guys would come find me, but would an A-Rank or higher appear? If there was an A-Rank, they would’ve appeared already.

‘Even if an A-Rank pops up, if they’re careless, I wouldn’t lose.’

After I stretched out my hand from the inside and locked the door, I put the key in my inventory. Should I pretend to be asleep too?

When I held the deeply asleep Peace and lied down, I actually felt drowsy. I did sleep late last night. Should I close my eyes for a bit? My stats were above B-Rank, so if someone approached, I’d probably notice quickly.

I petted the warm and soft fur and closed my eyes.

“Don’t die before me.”

You were called an S-Rank dungeon boss monster, so you should live a hundred years more than a stat F-Rank.

Bak Yerim bit her fingernails. It was a habit that had formed when she lost her parents and started to live off her uncle. But she had thought that she wouldn’t have cause again to bite her fingernails and wonder alone what to do, now after she had Awakened.

She was anxious and uneasy.

She repressed the urge to storm out right away, and instead, opened her status window and looked at the skill that she hadn’t used even once yet.

[White Corpse(S)]

She raised her hand and bobbed her finger as if she would touch the name.

It was a skill she was leery of using. She had also hoped that she wouldn’t have a reason to use it. But for this moment, it felt more welcome than any other skill.

Just then, the cell phone of Kim Jiyeon, who was with her, rang shortly. At the same time, Bak Yerim’s shoulder tensed slightly.

“He has arrived.”

At Kim Jiyeon’s words, Bak Yerim shook off the light tension and moved without hesitation.

She arrived where Haeyeon’s guild leader Han Yoohyun was standing. The face that was looking at her was too cold for words. The sensitive sense of smell caught the smell of blood.

“He is inside that room.”

Han Yoohyun said. Bak Yerim tossed a chilly glance at him and went toward the room.

Han Yoojin had wanted the two people to get along well, but it was close to impossible. The higher the stat’s rank, the more keenly abilities of other people, Awakened People over a certain rank, could be felt. It wasn’t to the point of realizing the stats and skills detailedly.

It was a type of scent.

The scent of the aptitude that Awakened People had, especially that of high ranking combat-based aptitudes, alone was strong. It was to the point of being unable to pretend you didn’t notice, even if you tried.

Bak Yerim had coldness and Han Yoohyun had heat. There was no reason to welcome someone you could feel a scent that, past being in conflict with each other, could become your weak point.

It might have been different if the ranks were different, but the two were both S-Ranks, despite the gap between levels. They were naturally past avoiding each other to being on guard against each other.

When Bak Yerim went inside the room and closed the door, Han Yoohyun let out a small sigh.

The two people would be so on edge each time, that it was stressful just facing each other. It was a feeling like the thread of patience was pulled tight to its limit.

Just then, Han Yoohyun's cell phone rang. It was Seseong's Sung Hyunjae. Han Yoohyun wrinkled his forehead, and then pressed the call button.

[Young master, how's the situation?]

It was a light voice. In addition, a hint of laughter was slightly mixed in.

[It really is a funny matter.]

“Is it funny.”

[Of course it’s funny. Not even I knew that Choi Sukwon would lose control that much.]

Following the soft laughter, there was a tsk, a small sound of a tongue clicking.

[Young master knows as well. The truth that there’s barely any possibility of Hunters under our supervision, Hunters who attack S-Rank dungeons with us, betraying us.]

Han Yoohyun silently acknowledged it. A-Rank, B-Rank Hunters who had first attacked high rank dungeons, especially S-Rank dungeons, with an S-Rank Hunter, became strongly attached to staying affiliated with S-Rank Hunters.

It was similar to a type of survival instinct.

If they faced an S-Rank dungeon boss monster that they would never be able to match with their own abilities, and watched right at the side of an S-Rank Hunter who could take it on at an equal level, and realized the fact that S-Rank dungeons could also break open anytime.

Even if it was obvious, a good sense of dependency would form.

Of course, that didn't occur 100%.

It didn't work well on Hunters who had already gotten enough experience. It was the same if the Mental stat or fear resistance was high. There also wasn't much of an effect for C-Rank and lower Hunters who had a hard time feeling an S-Rank monster's and a Hunter's abilities for certain. And even if they were A, B-Rank Hunters who had become dependent, they could be influenced by another S-Rank Hunter and break away.

Even so, if you paid a little bit of attention and looked after them, you could form your main guild members with just those people, who you could trust.

A big reason why Han Yoohyun could take his place at his young age was because of that. No matter if he was an S-Rank Hunter, if there wasn't a way to make trustable loyal followers, it would have been close to impossible for him to have grown his guild this fast.

Because of that reason, he had sent Hunters directly under the guild leaders who were at minimum B-Rank or higher, as Han Yoojin's guards.

[Bak Mingyu sent his vice guild leader, and Moon Hyuna sent a kid she adores like younger sibling to also make a strong impression, and I was planning on sending an adorable guy who needs a skill characteristic familiar the most, too. To think that Choi Sukwon, that idiot, would mess things up.]

The Hunters sent from each guild weren't just guards but were meant to promote friendship.

For Han Yoojin's rearing skill, the more he devoted his sincerity into the monsters, the bigger the effect was. But they couldn't force him to stay up all nights training the monsters they entrusted to him. In addition, he was someone who had announced that he wanted to live leisurely.

So, the method that came out was the promotion of friendship for the Hunter who would get the familiar. It was a simple calculation, that he would pay a little more attention if it was the familiar of someone he was close to.

In other words, it was a position that was something like a 1 on 1 blind date, but a flustering event like the other person being kidnapped had occurred.

"This matter, is it true that you genuinely did not anticipate it?"

[Didn't I say I didn't know? I know you're mad because your hyung-nim was kidnapped, but you shouldn't pointlessly take your anger out on someone.]

At the sharp tone, Sung Hyunjae spoke like he was reasoning with a young child.

[The outsider is an affiliated Hunter who wants familiars despite Haeyeon's regulation that only allows entrance to C-Ranks and lower. If it's this combination, unless Han Yoojin went outside of the building, unless some crazy S-Rank aimed for him, he should have been perfectly protected.]

In particular sections inside of Haeyeon Guild, only C-Ranks and lower could enter if they were outsiders. B-Rank and higher outsiders had a hard time even getting permission to enter and would get one of the guild's A-Rank Hunters as a monitor.

So, unfortunate incidents like this one virtually had almost no possibility of occurring. There should have been none.

[I had thought that MKC would hold out for three more years. It seems like they're more troubled than I had thought.]

"It seems that it was not that you did not anticipate it at all."

At Han Yoohyun's words indicating blame, Sung Hyunjae laughed softly.

[Young master shouldn't have been completely in the dark either. In the first place, both Moon Hyuna and Choi Sukwon made wrong choices. We're different from ordinary people. Aren't we too different to say we're the same kind of people?]

Han Yoohyun didn't confirm nor deny.

[And yet, they yielded on their own and put on leashes. Above all, people who don't know high rank dungeons could never understand us. Especially those old people who are

Breaker's and MKC's backers, they have their heads full with thoughts of squeezing out rake-offs. So that's why things like this happen. Since they couldn't understand.]

Sung Hyunjae's continuing voice was excited, unlike usual.

[Since it's a skill that can raise highest rank familiars, how lovable is that. Exactly what S-Rank would know of that skill's existence and still disturb Han Yoojin? Especially the guilds who got good conditions this time, should protect him, definitely not ruin their chance by doing something nonsensical. Didn't young master know that and show the hyung-nim you had previously hidden?]

"...I thought that, at minimum, at least within the country, it would be be safe."

[That's normal. I don't know the specifics of his inner thoughts, it became obvious through this that Choi Sukwon is losing his influence over his own guild.]

Unlike Moon Hyuna, who had actually made her own nest and firmly protected it while not caring about anything outside of that, Choi Sukwon had clumsily tried to widen his influence over his guild and his backers.

But exterminating dungeon monsters was completely different from dealing with socially cunning executives. He should have at least made a family connection through marriage like Hanshin's Bak Mingyu. Or even quitting and making a new start with his own strength like Sung Hyunjae and Han Yoohyun, would've been better.

While there were other choices, he had been unaffordably greedy, and in the end, had stupidly made his own weak point instead.

Sung Hyunjae laughed cheerfully and continued.

[It's earlier than I had expected, but we should start getting ready to divvy up and take in some bodies[3], right?]

"I am not in the mood to speak about such things."

[Because they're people cropping up thanks to your hyung-nim being kidnapped? Don't worry so much. I already put people up at the ports. Or, should I go myself, as well?]

"I will decline."

Han Yoohyun said, seeing Bak Yerim come out. Then, he ended the call. Bak Yerim, who was wrapped in a chilly white firefly-like light, went toward him and opened her mouth.

"It was my first time so it took a while, but I found it."

"Good job. Let's leave right away."

[1] so the word I'm tl-ing as 'flailed around' was, according to the krn dict, a dialect of a word that means 'thoughts suddenly appear in succesion', which makes no sense, and 'some object or light keeps on suddenly appearing and disappearing in succession', which also doesn't make much sense, but you could somehow stretch into meaning 'flail around'. i.e. idk but I think this is what it means.

[2] lit. 'ends of his words became short'. Bc honorifics/polite speech is longer, i.e. you add more things to the ends of your words, means that he's being rude and using casual speech. I could have tl'd it as 'he became rude' but 'being short with somebody' also means 'having an annoyed/curt/rude/angry tone' so I tl'd it like this. Idk if that meaning actually came across though...

[3] lit. 'piece/chunk(s) of meat' which is also an impolite way of saying 'people' or 'people's body'. Shj uses it again in his next sentence but I couldn't think of a good eng equiv and using 'bodies' tend to imply 'dead bodies' in eng so I just used 'people'

Chapter 49: < Now, Pretending to be Weak >

< Now, Pretending to be Weak >

Bam!

A loud noise struck my ears while I was in a deep sleep. It was probably the sound of the

closed door opening. Or breaking.

Continuing, The Weak's Premonition sent a piercing warning. Maybe because the effect was quadrupled, amazingly, even the opponent's rank and aptitude were felt.

The guy coming over was a stat S-Rank with an SS-Rank skill and had a mainly attack aptitude with a flame attribute.

It was Yoohyun, huh.

And there was Yerim and Kim Sunghan too.

When Yoohyun came closer and closer, The Weak's Premonition became even more strongly stirred up. It felt like it was whining and asking right in my ear what I was doing not running away. At the same time, Fear Resistance was like 'it's okay, there's no problem' and emitted a calming effect.

Should I say it was like 'it's a scary guy, super intimidated!' VS 'it's just an S-Rank, don't be intimidated!'? Of course, the winner was the latter. It was an L-Rank skill.

'Would it be this chaos for a week if I meet an A-Rank or higher? It's annoying.'

Could you turn off a premonition skill too? Still, having it on would be good for hiding my

state. I would be able to quickly tell when an A-Rank or higher was approaching.

Creak

I heard the sound of bars crumpling. Then, there was a noise of them completely breaking.

Would it be okay to start to pretend I woke up? Peace was so quiet, it might be weird for me to wake up first. But if it was the disgustingly perceptive little brother, I felt like he would notice I was pretending to be asleep.

Let's just say I took in less of the drug.

".....Hyung."

I heard a heavily weighted voice.

Let's see, should I act alarmed first? Being afraid because someone was coming, and then being alarmed but happy to hear my brother's voice and feeling relieved, would be an acceptable response.

When I slowly moved my head to the side, my little brother's face appeared in front of my eyes. It should be okay to put on a relieved smile around now. One that showed I hadn't completely woken up yet, but was pleased to see him.

...Doing this wasn't easy either.

"...Yoohyun. It's you, right.....?"

"Yeah, hyung. Are you okay?"

"Uh... yeah."

I was a poor helpless kidnapping victim. I was suddenly kidnapped and dragged to an unfamiliar place and locked up. And I had been living normally and faultlessly until now, as a stat F-Rank who hadn't been Awakened for long.

Of course I was frightened, and it was scary and terrifying, and I was pleased to see my little brother who had come to save me, and I was so thankful I clung on and even tears, fuck, let's be reasonable.

I put on a reasonable 'wow, what a relief, I'm saved' expression and held Peace, who was starting to shift, maybe from the effect of the drug wearing off. Then I raised up my body and,

"Ugh."

“Hyung?”

I had forgotten that I had hurt my ankle.

Yoohyun’s face, which was loosened as if to relax me, immediately hardened. It wasn’t just this guy who reacted.

“What was that sound just now? It was ahjussi’s voice, right? Could it be he is hurt? Crazy, what bastard did that!”

“Is he injured? What kind of thing to do to a weak person! I will call over a healer right away.”

Yerim’s and Kim Sunghan’s voices also cut in.

Then, my little brother picked me up. Ack, wait. He said he would call over a healer.

‘I can’t just push this aside either...’

It was a guy who would definitely be like ‘hyung, it seems like you’ve gotten stronger than normal?’ and notice.

“Ah, it’s not to the point of not being able to walk, though.....”

But even so, I couldn’t insist ‘no, stop, go away’. Since I was a kidnapping victim who had suffered from violence and was obviously frightened. ...How long did I have to be like this? Couldn’t I slowly start to act normal? Was it too fast?

“What bastard was it? What bastard made ahjussi get hurt?”

Yerim stuck right next to Yoohyun, who was walking toward the door while holding me, and kept on pressing in an angry voice. I had already killed that guy, though.

“.....I don’t, really remember.”

Maybe because I had just woken up, my memory really was blurry. Though what would I do with remembering a dead guy for a long time? What was his name? It was Kim something.

“Not even a little? Age, or maybe height-.”

“Hunter Bak Yerim.”

Yoohyun said in a stern tone.

“Those sorts of things should be asked after stability is secured first.”

“Ah... I apologize.”

Yerim sullenly hung her head. Really, and I couldn't say it was alright either.

When we passed through the door, I saw the healer who Kim Sunghan had brought. They were a Westerner and looking at the skills and ranks, they weren't a healer from Haeyeon Guild. Did other guilds provide aid? If it was an A-Rank healer, was it Seseong? Was there one in Breaker too – I couldn't remember well.

Whatever else, I had to find a healer for Haeyeon. Should I set aside some time to travel around the country?

The healer fixed my ankle and even removed the drug effect from Peace. But that little brother still didn't put me down. If it was an A-Rank healer, they fixed, not just fractures, but even breaks immediately, so let me go already.

“Now, put me down-.”

“I will come back after taking hyung back. Hunter Bak Yerim, please investigate this place. I think you know well which points to pay attention to.”

“Yes. I will take care of it for certain.”

Did he mean her using White Corpse? And telling her to pay attention seemed to be about her skills not getting caught. I had thought it would be better for Yerim to use that skill after a longer while. But it was a skill that was too useful to keep unused.

In the end, until I was lowered to the backseat of a car, my feet couldn't touch the ground. When I settled down, Peace went 'kkiing' softly and snuggled into my arms. With his ears and tail drooping, he looked really listless.

“Okay, okay. You were really alarmed, right? It's okay now.”

Even if you said he was a dungeon boss monster, he was still a kid, a baby.

Yoohyun got on the next seat and the car started. Speaking of, where was this? Was it outside of Seoul?

“Let's go straight to the hospital first. While we're there, get a general health check-up, too.”

That little brother said, taking out his cell phone. Why were you saying something difficult all of a sudden? The healer already treated me!

“I’m not hurt anywhere besides my ankle.”

I would have a bit of a bruise on my belly. And some of my hair was pulled out. When I was being thrown around, my shoulders and back also... actually there was a lot. I had rolled around more than I had thought.

“And right now, I want to go home.....”

I said in a purposely weak voice. Hospitals were definitely a no. If I got a health check-up right now, there would be a commotion. All my stats had risen so starting from my durability, things would be different, so after seeing the injection needle unable to go through, immediately they would be like ‘it seems you aren’t stat F-Rank’.

“Can’t I just go home and rest? I don’t want to meet unfamiliar people anymore today, and for the examination, I’ll probably have to get something like anesthesia again... I don’t want to think about stuff like that for a long time.”

Even though it wasn’t kidnapping trauma, I didn’t like hospitals. Anyways, I couldn’t go for at least one week. At my words, Yoohyun put his cell phone away again.

“Sorry. I wasn’t thinking. Let’s go straight home. You’re really not hurt anywhere, right?”

"I'm okay."

It was a relief. Now he wouldn't say anything about getting a health check-up for a while now. I was relieved of a worry, and changed the subject.

"But you found me faster than I had thought you would? The guy who kidnapped me assured me that you wouldn't know until we were on the boat."

"The MKC Guild Leader tipped us off."

"The MKC Guild Leader? He was related to it?"

"He wasn't behind it; should I say it was negligence of management? It seems like it wasn't the person he was originally going to send. The system of command transmission in MKC has a bit of a problem... it's a bit tough to talk about it in detail here, and that person should've been different from the people sent from the other guilds."

So it really was like that. The rank was different, but more than anything, he had too little interest in familiars.

"I had just thought MKC was saving manpower. I guess the situation there isn't good."

They had held out for 3 more years originally. Like this, wouldn't they crash faster than

before the regression?

“It’ll be okay from now on. For now, MKC will be exempt and for the other guilds, the guild leaders said they would directly let us know the visitors’ information.”

“The guild leaders would? Aren’t they busy? They have to go into dungeons too.”

“There’s no helping it. Unless there’s the danger of the information changing in the middle, that’s the most certain method. Of course, among the other five, there aren’t any guild leaders who can’t properly manage their own affiliated Hunters, like in MKC, but just in case.”

Now, I really wouldn’t have my safety threatened. No, still, you couldn’t guarantee it 100%. Where would you find a perfect place in this world?

“Even if they paid attention like that, there aren’t any ways to make the guild members not betray you, right?”

How could you know what was inside someone’s mind? At my words, Yoohyun hesitated a little and then opened his mouth.

“That’s, affiliated guild members are a little different. Normally, if they had attacked a high rank dungeon with the guild leader, they wouldn’t really do something like betray. That is to say... something like camaraderie?”

“Really?”

Camaraderie, huh. There wasn't anything like that at all in low rank Hunter teams. Of course, it wasn't that there weren't good people. The problem was that they didn't go far and all died.

There were fixed low rank teams united through trust and friendship, but in long term cases, they were extremely rare. As much as they stuck together, if one of them died, they couldn't bear the shock and would break up, or even if that didn't happen, if they seemed like they were doing pretty well, they would be attacked from the outside, since there were many Hunters who would find it unpleasant.

But if it was a high rank dungeon attack team where those sorts of unfortunate incidents barely occurred, they could form a strong camaraderie, and continue to stay together.

‘Still, trusting in something like camaraderie and thinking there wouldn't be a reason to be betrayed. Is he really still just young?’

Was it still okay like this, Haeyeon Guild Leader? I knew the future where he was on a roll, but I worried a little. A flaw that didn't originally exist appeared in MKC too, because of me, so there was a possibility of anything else changing too.

“But hyung, are you really okay?”

"I'm fine? Why?"

"No, um..... You're a little different from normal."

At the significant words, my heart skipped[1]. Could he have noticed my stats changing? I was staying still, though. But the continuing words were unexpected.

"Something like a nasty reptile smell....."

".....What?"

"No, I'm not saying that the smell is coming from hyung... You didn't happen to get caught by a curse or poison?"

.....Ridiculously sharp guy. Was he feeling the skill I received from Blackie? I slightly used Lizard Stuck on the Wall and shook my head.

"If something like that was put on me, I would have known first. The healer didn't say anything either."

"Maybe if it was poison, but if it was a curse, a healer wouldn't have noticed either. Just in

case, here.”

He took off a bracelet on his wrist and then pulled my wrist over to put it on there. No, that wasn’t necessary. Then, he brought my hand over until the back of my hand was about to touch his nose, and sniffed me.

“It seems like it’s definitely gotten weaker than before.”

“.....Is that so.”

It was a relief that Wall Lizard had an effect. Stat S-Ranks really were troublesome.

“If you’re an S-Rank, you can feel things like that too?”

I asked, pulling away my grabbed hand without giving my maximum strength.

“A little if it’s right after the skill is used? If it’s the level I felt from hyung, rather than being the target of a skill, it’s more likely that you have the skill, though. Since it’s not absolute.”

Wow, you really could know even things like that. It was a scam. I should be careful, very careful. But I had a lot of other skills; could he not feel those?

'If he had felt them, he would have questioned me a lot already.'

Seeing how he had only noticed the poisons and curses of Blackie's skills, it seemed like attack skills were limited to attribute.

"Here, take this back. If I had really been cursed, I probably would've been de-cursed now."

I took off the bracelet and handed it over. You wouldn't know, but I have an L-Rank curse resistance. You take good care to have de-cursing items instead.

"Your detoxification and de-cursing items were taken away, right? Soon, I'll find even better ones for you."

Yoohyun said, taking back the bracelet. Um, I went around without them on so they were in my inventory, untouched. Should I pretend they were taken and give them to Myeongwoo? And speaking of, would that guy Myeongwoo be worrying, too?

"Before that, mana increasing equipment is more urgent. My earrings were taken too."

Right now, even my mana was enough, but after one week, it would hit rock bottom again.

“The one that I have now is just a ratio increase. Should I give you that at least?”

“I won’t need to use the skill right away, so it’s okay.”

It was a little embarrassing because that little brother kept on trying to take care of me. Setting aside that we were family, we had a relationship that was enough to get care in a business way, but if I was going to take advantage anyways, it would be more comfortable to do so to other guilds. Especially MKC, shouldn’t I properly recompense them?

It was already dark when we arrived at Haeyeon Guild.

“Home would be safer than the dorms, though.”

Yoo Hyun said, pressing the elevator button. It was safer, but I had an ominous hunch that if I went in now, it would be hard to come back out.

“No thanks. Anyways, you have to go back right away. It’s more comforting to have another person around, even an F-Rank, rather than being alone.”

“I don’t really have to go-.”

“You should go quickly, Guild Leader. I can go by myself from here.”

“Still...”

“If you dig out the instigator and clean everything up even one day faster, wouldn’t I also be more comfortable?”

Did I pretend too much that I was weak? Stop clinging and quickly go work.

I said it was okay, but Han Yoohyun took me all the way to the dorm room door before he turned back. It would be great if it ended with this – he wouldn’t act more annoying from now on, right?

“Peace, we’ve finally come back home.”

Let’s sleep early today. Should we sleep together for the first time in a while?

I coaxed Peace, who completely couldn’t regain his energy, and opened the door. Then, when I also opened the inner door.

“.....Yoojin.”

I saw Yoo Myeongwoo with a devastated look on his face.

[1] it's more like 'sting/burn' but in this context, it means more like he was shocked/alerted, if you say sb's 'heart (was) pricked' in eng it implies more that their conscience was roused (which this krn phrase can also mean, but that's not the meaning here).

Chapter 50: < A Date First of All (1) >

< A Date First of All (1) >

"Uh..... um."

Maybe he had cried the entire time because the rims of his eyes were red. With his complexion being pale and him looking like he had no strength, he seemed like a paper doll that had fallen into water and was carelessly fished out and dried.

This guy looked more severe than me, who was kidnapped.

"...Are you okay?"

Though normally, I should be the one being asked if I was okay.

As soon as I spoke, huge droplets[1] of tears started to drop from Myeongwoo. Now, was pulling me over into his embrace next? Well, it seemed like he worried a lot, so I should calmly receive it. And there was a lot of free food I had gotten from him too.

But, Yoo Myeongwoo just cried without a sound and didn't come towards me. Why was he like this? Was the shock too big? Did that guy, instead of me, need to be sent to the hospital?

".....I'm okay, though. I'm fine. I'm not even hurt anywhere."

I don't know what to do, so just say something. Should I put Peace down and pull him over into my embrace first? I was the victim, though.

".....There was nothing I could do."

Finally, Myeongwoo opened his mouth.

"I, really... nothing at all....."

The voice that was forcefully squeezed out was stained with guilt.

It wasn't that I didn't understand. The person who had saved him several times already, had met with danger, but he had to stay cooped up in a room corner.

But.

“But that’s not your fault. You must have been unable to move and was confined somewhere.”

Yoo Myeongwoo wasn’t a normal employee, much less a guild member. He was still employed by me. So, if a sensitive problem occurred within the guild like this matter, naturally his actions could only have been restricted.

Or rather, it would be a relief if it had ended with house arrest. There was the possibility of receiving suspicion and being investigated.

“You’re in the position of being an outsider to a certain point, so the problem might’ve gotten bigger if you had tried to put yourself forward. So don’t worry.”

“But I.....”

He swallowed his words and chewed on his lips, before wiping away his tears. That guy raised the head that was lowered, and smiled.

“Sorry. You should be tired but I acted all annoying. Hurry and come in.”

“No, it’s okay...”

Your reaction was more worrying. What was it? I would have let it pass with 'he's the same as ever' if he had clung to me and bawled. The atmosphere like he had organized things and made a decision and resolved his heart all by himself, was uncomfortable.

"It's really okay. In the first place, it's a problem that the guilds that contracted to protect me should figure out."

I said again, taking off my shoes and coming in. Myeongwoo halfheartedly nodded and asked if I wanted to eat something light. I was thinking of sleeping early, but I hadn't eaten lunch or dinner, so it would be good to fill my stomach up a little. And I had to feed Peace dinner too.

-Geureureung

Peace, who had jumped onto the bed, turned around in circles. It seemed like he was feeling better after eating.

"You shouldn't go up without even washing your paws. Come here."

I picked up Peace and went to the bathroom attached to the bedroom. When I did, he whined and pretended to be pitiful.

"Since you went outside, you have to wash. Inside the cage wasn't clean either."

-Kkooeuoong

“Okay, okay. Let’s just take a simple shower.”

Maybe because he was part of the cat family and was flame attribute, he really didn’t like washing. After coaxing him and showering together, and washing and even drying his fur, I became tired even with the higher stats. The psychological reason was probably bigger than the physical, but I wondered if I would die from overwork from looking after five when my stats return to normal.

“Let’s sleep now.”

When I turned off the lights and closed my eyes, I opened them again only a bit later. In the middle of the dark, I saw Peace hunched over and stuck right next to me. The red fur along with the mixed in golden hairs were more clearly visible than normal. So my vision had gotten slightly better too.

I looked at him for a bit, and then took out a glass bottle from my inventory. The red stone inside the bottle emitted a faint light.

‘Still, all of them are S-Ranks and planned to be S-Ranks.’

Yoo Myeongwoo was stat F-Rank, but he wouldn't need to attack dungeons, so he would be safe. If he just got the skill, he would get protected almost as much as I was.

I didn't have to worry too much about the remaining four. Of all the S-Rank Hunters in the world, even 5 years later when the level of difficulty rose, there weren't any who had died in an attack, except for exactly one. ...If you considered Yoohyun as well, then it was two. Anyways, it meant that if they didn't do anything in particular, they wouldn't die.

The death rate for A-Rank Hunters was also extremely low. Low rank Hunters, well, there were many and many died, and for mid rank Hunters, surprisingly, B-Ranks had a higher death rate than C-Ranks. It was because unlike C-Ranks, B-Ranks also went into high rank dungeon attacks.

'For my mental health at least, it should be better to only apply the keyword to possible S-Ranks, at minimum A-Ranks.'

High rank familiars would be well taken care of, as much as they were valuable.

If it really didn't work out, I should turn off the poison resistance and borrow the strength of modern medical science. Before the regression, when I was just constantly drinking, suddenly people appeared and dragged me to a hospital and I got treated for alcoholism, but they did it really well.

‘.....Could that possibly have been Yoohyun’s doing?’

At that time, I wasn’t normal so I didn’t think much, but it really was weird that people unlocked the main entrance and came in, just because I had fallen into alcohol for about a week. The quality of the facility and counselling was really good too. The counselor had told me that if it got tough, to contact them anytime, and even gave me their business card. I wondered if that person was working even now.

Anyways, if it was possible, it would be great if the Last Repayment skill had no reason to be invoked again. And it was all too much of a waste to end just with 7 days.

I put the glass bottle into my inventory and closed my eyes again.

The next day, I spent all of it inside my house. Peace didn’t really want to go outside too, and Myeongwoo also didn’t go to sharpen knives, and made snacks for me. I didn’t know he also had a talent for baking. I had a hard time stopping myself from automatically saying I wanted us to live together forever.

In the afternoon, Yoohyun visited with a key technician. Saying that they had thoroughly searched the entire building, but couldn’t find the inventory sealing bracelet.

That was because I had it. I should’ve put it somewhere, but I had forgotten, and had come back just bringing it over.

“And Hunter Bak Yerim was caught in a stats drop curse for contract violation.”

I was touching the wrist that had the bracelet, when Yoohyun said something confusing.

“What? Contract violation?”

Uh... then again, it was a contract that had entrusted my guarding to her, so it would be called a violation.

Hearing about it, the time when the curse appeared wasn't right after the kidnapping, but a little bit after. I thought it might have been when I was being beaten up.

Since I put in a vague condition like 'guard', it seemed like it based it on violence above a certain amount being applied to the guarding target. Since, when I was kidnapped, besides being grabbed, there wasn't much else. And passing out was because of using up mana.

“For the Association, hyung can just contact them to say it wasn't a contract violation, and for the curse, the related curse skill holder can lift it. The problem is that Hunter Bak Yerim is refusing it.”

“Huh, why?”

“She said it was true that she couldn't uphold the contract and that she would pay the cost.”

Yerim, that guy[2], really, being stubborn over something pointless.

“I’ll talk to her about it.”

“I’ll leave it to you. Since she listens well to hyung.”

She didn’t listen well to that extent.

“Ah, wait.”

I grabbed Yoohyun, who had finished his business and was about to leave. That guy turned to look at me.

“So, gate stones. Do you happen to have any left?”

They were precious even 5 years later, so asking for one when they were even more precious now, made my face hot. But I really needed one.

Right now, my state was close to an A-Rank combat Hunter. In other words, I could attack a low rank dungeon by myself.

Of course, my real goal wasn't the dungeon attack, but the contact from the person who made the system.

If I used the most out Lizard Stuck on the Wall, it wouldn't be hard to secretly go outside. If I bought an F-Rank dungeon exclusive entrance pass, the secret would be guaranteed too.

But, it was a problem because something like a system error could happen and a monster outside of the rank could appear again.

'I could interact with the person who made the system in front of the dungeon entrance, and use Wall Lizard and come out straight away, in such a case, but I can't know if contact will come before the entrance closes.'

I wanted to take one gate stone to prepare for possible danger. If I really couldn't, I could wait during the time before the entrance closes and just leave if there is no contact, but then it would be a waste of money and the chance. The application of Last Repayment also had just 6 days left now.

"Why? It wouldn't be to go into a dungeon?"

That little brother frowned right away.

“Well, I can’t just not go in at all. I want to go in my spare time and go up at least 30 levels. I might just get something like a defense skill.”

Of course, I didn’t have anything like that. What exactly was my aptitude? Did I not have something like an aptitude because I was just a normal and easy ordinary person A?

“But there’s this matter too, and also that bird appearing last time. No matter what, it’s uneasy. Of course, I know it’s precious, but.....”

Ah crap, the more I talked, the more it felt pathetic. Should I just buy a few exclusive bids, and go in and out of them a lot? Was there a penalty if you bought exclusive bids and came out without doing an attack? I had never wasted money like that, or even thought of doing so, so I couldn’t remember.

“...Specifically getting up to 30 levels isn’t bad. The 10 level skill was S-Rank and among the initial skills, one was A-Rank, so the probability of a skill with a high rank coming out is high.”

Yoohyun wasn’t inclined to it, but nodded his head.

“Instead, I’ll choose the dungeon to attack and the team you’ll do it with. That’s okay, right?”

“I have to get your help anyways; I can’t attack even an F-Rank by myself.”

When I chattered on, Yoohyun took out a gate stone. My conscience was pricked. Still, you couldn't do something stupid when you were a stat F-Rank.

"You have reserves, right?"

If it was just this one, then it would be better to not take it.

"I do. In the first place, it's something that doesn't need to be used. Since me using a gate stone would be the same as meaning I've lost most of the main attack team. It would be better than me dying as well, but the guild would probably look miserable?"

He was saying something brutal while smiling. Like that guy said, it was something that was a hundred times better not to use. I nodded my head to agree and put the gate stone in my inventory.

I should look for F-Rank dungeons where exclusive bids were possible and that were located as close as possible.

"Peace, we should go out today. Hm?"

If it was normal, he would have whined about going out first, but Peace didn't seem inclined at all to go out today as well. He wouldn't have known the situation too well because he

was asleep, but the aftereffects were excessive.

I thought it wouldn't be good to leave him like this, so I purposefully held him and went out. It would be good if we could go outdoors instead of to the basement training room.

I went toward the elevator while coaxing Peace, who was fluttering his tail in dissatisfaction. Today, the person who would be entrusted with my guard was.

'Huh? That face is...'

It was a face I remembered. A beautiful fairy-like woman with gorgeous blond hair and deep blue eyes that were close to navy. She came towards me and smiled brightly.

"Hello! I am Seseong's Kang Soyoung!"

Seseong's A-Rank Hunter Kang Soyoung. She wasn't of Korean descent, but was a British person who was recruited by the Seseong Guild Leader and also had Korean citizenship. Limited to B-Rank and higher Hunters, even dual citizenship was permitted without conditions.

She was a talented Hunter who stood out enough for Sung Hyunjae to personally bring over, and her age was 19 years, and...

‘She was in a scandal with Yoohyun.’

It wasn't decided that they were dating, but quite a lot of rumors circulated. That young lady could possibly become my sister-in-law[3].

Seeing her for real, she was even prettier. There was still a little hint of youth, so she was cute as well. Her expression was bright and lovable.

“Hello, I am Han Yoojin. Please take care of me for today.”

“I would like to request that of you!”

Yeah, cute. Her personality seemed good too. Hearing the cheerful voice, I automatically smiled.

“So this child must be Peace. He is even cuter than when I saw him on TV!”

Kang Soyoung said in a bouncy tone. Our Peace was indeed cute. As expected, she was a great young lady.

“You will be going to the training room, correct?”

“Yes.”

Pressing the elevator button, she tossed a look with a sparkling light in her eyes. It was a little embarrassing because it was an expression like she was a fan seeing a celebrity.

“I was really alarmed when I heard the news. It is really a relief that you are safe.”

“Thank you for worrying.”

“I was being sincere. Really. Han Yoojin-nim is my only hope.”

“Hope?”

What hope? Kang Soyoung boarded the elevator and energetically nodded her head.

“Actually, I have one SS-Rank skill.”

She said softly, lowering her volume. An SS-Rank skill? I hadn’t heard that Kang Soyoung had such a thing. I wanted to try using the Seed-Leaf skill, but right now, her gaze was piercing into me, so I couldn’t. Let’s try it later secretly.

“If it is alright, could I hear what kind of skill it is?”

“That is right... Han Yoojin-nim would come to know it anyways.”

Kang Soyoung’s voice became more and more soft. Continuing, I heard a whisper.

“It is Dragon Rider.”

Ah... It was worth me being her hope. Really.

The monsters that were the most difficult to tame were exactly dragon types. On top of that, Kang Soyoung was an A-Rank Hunter, so finding a dragon type familiar that matched her rank would be like plucking a star from the sky. Since it was hard starting from finding a dragon type familiar, they couldn’t be used as expendables, and she would’ve had to consider it as just not having the SS-Rank skill.

“You must have gone through many hardships.”

Kang Soyoung nodded with an eager expression.

“Yes. I cannot explain the specifics, but it is a really, really good skill. But only if I have a dragon type familiar that matches my rank. But how could I find... a dragon type familiar, and at least a high rank or higher at that.....”

She stopped speaking and even tears glimmered in her eyes. That a combat Hunter couldn't use an SS-Rank skill, how frustrating would that have been?

"Still, if it is a dragon type, it would be hard to find them as a baby monster."

Even if I could raise familiars, you couldn't make something out of nothing. There needed to be a baby of a high rank monster, to raise it.

"Please do not worry! There is a place among the S-Rank dungeons under Seseong's jurisdiction, where a dragon's nest appears sometimes. Though, they only appear as eggs, and it being impossible to make them hatch is a problem, but this time, I decided to firmly prepare and wait until it naturally hatches."

".....You must have many hardships ahead."

"Still, if I do well, I could get a highest rank baby monster. It is worth suffering for."

Then again, it was as good as dragon type. If she could only just get it, it would become the best familiar. In addition, if it was combined with Kang Soyoung's apparently impressive SS-Rank skill... she would only be called an A-Rank, but outshine S-Ranks.

Ah, I wanted to introduce my brother. They should already know each other's faces at least.

Couldn't they meet a little faster than before the regression? Even if they didn't formally date, they should've had goodwill for each other at least, for the scandal to break out.

We arrived at the training room in an amicable atmosphere. But Peace didn't even think about coming down from my arms. When I loosened my arms, he crawled up to my shoulders and stuck close.

"This....."

"It seems like Peace's shock over being kidnapped was big..."

Kang Soyoung said, with an expression filled with worry.

"He was sleeping the whole time, but it seems like he felt something. It would be good if I could refresh his mood, but we cannot go outside."

"Ah, then what do you think of going over to our guild building? We have a roof garden. It is large and well decorated!"

"A roof garden?"

It was alluring, but the problem was that Yoohyun probably wouldn't let us go out.

“It is regretful, but with the kidnapping matter, it seems it will be hard to go out right now.”

At my words, Kang Soyoung thrust her chest out confidently.

“Please do not worry. I will supplement with more people to perfectly guard you. And right now, Guild Leader is at the guild. It is safer than anywhere!”

Um, suddenly, I didn’t want to go.

[1] lit. ‘chicken poop-like’

[2] yes, I’m using ‘guy’ as a gender neutral term

[3] this isn’t really necessary, but fun fact, the word for ‘sister-in-law’ here is specifically ‘one’s younger brother’s wife, when one is male’

Chapter 51: < A Date First of All (2) >

< A Date First of All (2) >

“It is too burdensome to supplement with more people just for me. I do not want to needlessly cause an inconvenience.”

Before that, I wanted even less to meet the Seseong Guild Leader Sung Hyunjae. That person himself was unpleasant, but more than anything, my current state was the problem. Yoohyun also said ‘hyung you’re a little weird’, so the possibility of Sung Hyunjae feeling something else was big.

It would be just that if I used Wall Lizard a bit and played innocent, but there was no reason for me to walk right up to him with my own feet.

“A burden! It is not at all.”

Kang Soyoung looked straight at me with her two eyes filled with sincerity. The big eyes were really pretty, too. It really was a face that seemed to embody the word loveliness. Continuing, she yelled in a voice filled with, as expected, sincerity.

“It is something for the person who will raise my child!”

.....There was a time just a while ago when I heard that nonsense. I didn’t know I would hear it again.

“...It is a little not right to speak that way. If other people hear, they could misunderstand.”

"It is okay. Everyone is speaking that way."

Wow crap, what.....

"Everyone, you say...?"

Kang Soyoung nodded cutely.

"Yes. Hyuna unni, that is, the Breaker Guild Leader, spoke that way several times, and in no time, it spread everywhere."

Shit, Moon Hyuna! It spread everywhere, just what are you doing! I told you not to speak behind my brother's back so you're going around speaking behind mine! It wasn't completely wrong, so it made me even more mad.

"Still, rather than 'child', wouldn't something like 'familiar' or 'monster' or 'magic beast' be better?"

"Those do not show enough affection. More than anything, if they are highest rank familiars, they are hard-to-find partners who you will be with for life. I will really pile on love and look after it like my own child. My heart is starting to beat fast already. How lovable would my young dragon be."

And so even her cheeks became slightly red. It wasn't that I didn't understand those feelings, but still... still.....

"So there is completely no reason to be burdened! Rather, it is alright for you to demand more! Do you happen to have anything you need? Even if I look like this, I have quite a lot of money collected."

Since she was a giant guild affiliated A-Rank hunter, of course she would have a lot, but if I really demanded more, it felt like I would become a bad guy bullying money from a young kid. She was eleven years younger, no six years younger. At any rate, she was a kid who hadn't even hit twenty. And I didn't have anything I really needed.

"No, that is fine. I do not have anything I need."

"Then, I will help you with the walk in the garden, for now."

"No, but I cannot bother you with something like this."

"Please do not worry. Far from being bothered, everyone will welcome you. If you still worry, I will certainly get permission from Guild Leader."

And then she took out her cell phone right away. Ugh... well anyways, Yoohyun wouldn't

give permission so it didn't matter.

'...Though I do want to go to a park with Peace.'

It really was dangerous to meet with Sung Hyunjae right now. Let's go next time, Peace.

"Yes, Guild Leader! Yes, yes."

In the meantime, Kang Soyoung was calling Sung Hyunjae. It was more of an amicable mood than I had thought it would be.

"Guild Leader said that you could come over any time! He said he would also send over people right away."

Ah, yes. But there was still one more hurdle. I smiled back at Kang Soyoung and took out my cell phone.

"Then I will try to get permission from the Haeyeon Guild Leader. Since I cannot stray from here on my own just because I want to."

"Yes, of course do so."

I became a little sorry seeing her smile widely. There was no reason my little brother would give permission. When I called, Yoohyun answered soon. I concisely explained the whole story and then asked.

“As expected, it’s too soon to go out, right? It’s okay if you say I can’t. I’ll understand.”

Now, quickly say that I can’t.

[I do think it’s early, but if hyung is okay with it, then you can go.]

.....Excuse me? Just wait a moment.

“I mean, even though it’s visiting a different guild? I can go?”

[MKC is impossible of course, and it would be a little uneasy too if it was Breaker or Hanshin, but Seseong is okay.]

That little brother said again that it was okay. What, it wasn’t the Yoohyun I knew. Did I call the wrong person?

[Anyways, I was worried because I felt like I was confining you inside too much, so go there sometimes to get some fresh air. They decorated it really well.]

...As expected, it didn't seem like he was my brother. He wasn't like this. Why did this person suddenly change? I had only trusted you. Shit, now that I was here, I couldn't say I didn't want to go.

When I glanced at Kang Soyoung, I saw an innocent smile that was asking, even with just the shape of her mouth, 'he is saying it is okay, right?'. Ughh.

".....You wouldn't be feeling uneasy or worried or anything?"

[That's...um. No, it's okay. It should be stifling for hyung too. It'll be much safer than anywhere else, so don't worry. I'll call over about two from our side for the road there and back. Rest well and come back.]

"Uh... yeah....."

The call ended. That little brother had betrayed my trust. My back was all stinging.

'.....Is Seseong that trustable?'

Or, was it possibly because of Kang Soyoung? Did this brat already feel goodwill toward

Kang Soyoung? He wouldn't be selling his hyung in order to look good in front of a woman, right?

"It is really a relief you received permission! I will prepare for us to leave right away."

Seeing her genuinely happy appearance, I thought it would be enough for that little brother to be enamored. Even if it wasn't Yoohyun, what man wouldn't like her? Of course, I couldn't know yet if he really had a thing for her, but there was no smoke without fire[1].

That's right, it's okay. I just had to be a little careful. Those two seemed to suit each other well. It really did seem like living alone in that large house was lonesome. If it's like that, just quickly date and marry already. My nibbling[2] would probably be cute. They said that for biracial people, there were a lot of cases where they were cute and pretty. It would be good if they looked like Yoohyun.

"Yes, I will entrust it to you."

My younger brother as well.

"We've arrived~."

Kang Soyoung said animatedly. Seseong's roof garden was on top of the 15-story 2nd new building connected to the main building. When Kang Soyoung opened the glass door, a breeze mixed with smell of grass flowed toward us.

How long was it since I came to this kind of park?

‘.....I don’t even remember that well.’

There were times when a dungeon’s environment was a forest or grasslands, but it was different from that. A walk with a light heart. I definitely didn’t have that kind of leisure.

...No, that was just an excuse; if I was going to do it, I could have done it any time. How much time would it have taken to go to a nearby park? And even if I didn’t purposely go find a park, if I wanted to take a walk, I just needed to go outside of my house to do so.

Looking around at the surroundings anew while walking slowly, tilting my head from time to time to look at the sky too. What shapes the clouds were today, how much thicker had the trees along the roads grown now that it was summer – I could read the flyers stuck to the walls, and I could rest my gaze on the ants crawling between the sidewalk blocks.

‘Well, I probably wouldn’t be able to do that now even if I wanted to.’

It became that I couldn’t even dream of going around casually alone. I should just make one of these in my building.

The roof garden was large. It was wide open, but tall trees were densely planted, wrapping

around the border, and hid as much as possible the fact that it was on top of a roof. The trail was well made, and at the arranged flowerbeds, there were all kinds of sculptures and fountains, a small greenhouse, etc. – it had everything it should have.

And I couldn't see a single person.

"It seems like nobody is here."

"In order for you to use it comfortably, the entrance has been regulated. It is not that there is nobody at all; there are a few people doing surveillance. Someone could invade from the air, you know?"

It wasn't even a target for localized shooting, so I wondered if there even would be people doing such a thing in broad daylight, but it was thorough.

"Peace, look here. It's a patch of grass."

-Kkoooong

I lowered Peace on top of the grass, but far from running and playing, the young Horned Flame Lion immediately stuck to my leg. The weather was nice and the sunlight was nice and the scenery was nice, but why didn't he seem to have any interest?

“Why are you like this? You don’t like it?”

-Kkiing

“There’s a butterfly flying around there.”

He pretended not to see the flutteringly dancing yellow butterfly. Seeing how it was like this, I started to worry. Was the trauma more severe than I had thought? Were there psychologists specialized in animals?

“What should we do, our Peace?”

When I squatted down and stretched my hand to pet his neck, he tightly grabbed my arm with his front paws. It felt like he was particularly clinging – did he not want to part from me?

‘Could it possibly be because he was made to be suddenly apart from me, not because he was kidnapped?’

He was suddenly snatched out of nowhere and was shut in a cage for a long time alone. Since he was sensitive enough to sense an appraisal skill, he could have felt the surrounding situation to a certain extent even if he was asleep.

“That kind of thing won’t happen now.”

I didn’t know how much of my words he would understand, but I first tried to soothe him.

“Look, see the noona next to us? You can tell how strong she is, right? This noona is protecting us.”

“That’s right, Peace. I’m here, so it’s okay.”

Kang Soyoung chimed in on cue. Then she bent down and pulled me into her arms a little. At the same time, Peace tensed and his fur stood on end.

-Keuheung!

“It’s okay, Peace. This noona is a good person. She’s not trying to harm me.”

“That’s right, we get along well. See this.”

And then, smack, she pressed her lips to my cheek. Uh, something like this was a little awkward... Maybe because she was a foreigner, she was too touchy-feely[3].

-Geureung?

Peace looked at us stuck close together and tilted his head.

“This noona will protect us, so you don’t have to worry and you can play. It’s okay.”

The tips of the ears covered in red fur bobbed up and down. Peace, who had finally separated from me, started to look around the surroundings. I had heard that the dungeon the Horned Flame Lion came out of was a volcanic region, so it should be the first time in his life seeing this kind of green scenery.

Paak

The still small front paws scratched the grass. The cut grass blades scattered in all directions. He twitched his nose and sniffed the grass smell a little, before turning around once in a circle and looking back up at me.

“You like it?”

-Kkiang!

He jumped in place and then started to explore the surroundings. He didn’t look like he was planning on going far, but if it was this much, I thought he would be fine soon.

“I think it would be fine if you move away now.”

I said toward the Kang Soyoung who was still embracing me. You said there were surveillance people around, so it would be great if you would maintain a proper distance.

“Should I help you up?”

“It is fine.”

Did I look like I couldn't keep my own body steady? Though relatively, I would probably look like a hatchling tottering around like it could die soon.

I walked on the trail, following the direction that Peace wanted to go. Since a little red body was dashing around in a flowerbed full of hydrangeas, soon lavender petals started to flutter all over the place. It took an instant for a flowerbed to be ruined.

“That is-.”

“It is alright!”

As soon as I parted my mouth, Kang Soyoung smiled brightly and spoke.

“Please do not mind it. There is no problem even if you plow over the entire place. It is just landscaping, so we can just do it again.”

As expected of a giant guild, they sure were generous. Peace was having that much fun, and once the Repayment skill effect ended, we should come often to play.

“If it is not an inconvenience, could I ask about how long it takes to grow a highest rank familiar? I did not hear the specifics.”

Kang Soyoung asked, carefully.

“It differs according to the monster, so I also do not know exactly. I think it differs according to type and ranking. And there should be a difference depending on whether they follow the training well. If it is a group of dragons from an S-Rank dungeon, they should be 2nd Rank or 3rd Rank, correct?”

If only one came out, it should be 2nd Rank, but if a nest happened to appear, it would mostly likely be a group. At my words, Kang Soyoung nodded her head.

“Yes. Specifically, they are 3rd Rank flying dragon type. They are Thorn Winged Dark Dragons[4], and their stamina and defense are good and their abilities stand out even for flying dragons.”

Flying dragons were comparatively on the weak side among dragon types. But with their flight abilities standing out, they would be even more useful used as a familiar.

“As much as three thorns this big sprout from their wings; they are really cute.”

“...Excuse me?”

Did she just say they were cute? Thorns that were as big as both her arms spread wide?

“There are scale-like thorns on their tails, and those can be shot out too! They are slightly smaller than my forearm, but covered in a paralyzing poison. They are flying dragons, but they have front legs and back legs, all four of them, so they are even cuter. They are strong and their scales are hard, too. The color of their scales is black, and those glossy things look just like black gems placed in rows and look really pretty.”

Um, truthfully, far from something cute, I could only think of a terrible-looking giant lizard fiend[5] with wings. In addition, it was a tough-looking jet black dragon with thorns sticking up out of it. Her taste was a little unusual.

“Ever since I first went in for an attack, I wanted to tame them – to think that I would be able to fulfill my wish. Ever since I learned about the magic beast raising skill, every day felt like I was walking on clouds. Ah, really – could I hug you one more time?”

“You cannot.”

Since I first met her, I was thinking that the atmosphere stood out; she was really excited. It was this much even now, so when I raised a familiar for her, if I just casually told her once that I love her, the keyword would probably apply right away.

Still, I didn't know how the keyword effect would appear, so it would be better not to do so. Something terrible like being treated like a dad or a mom by my sister-in-law couldn't happen. Let's be careful speaking.

I was thinking of casually bringing up Yoohyun, when,

[The Weak's Premonition is sending a warning!]

The premonition skill that had popped up quite a lot of times while coming here, was incited again. Who was it now... fuck, it was an S-Rank. He should be busy, so why was he going around appearing here.

[1] lit. 'if it's not lit, would smoke come out of the chimney' and one of its meaning is the eng equiv above, which basically means 'there wouldn't be rumors if there wasn't sth true abt it'

[2] the krn word for nephew/niece is gender neutral so I'm using this. My city now.

[3] lit. 'her skinship was excessive' where 'skinship' is eng transliterated into krn as konglish slang

[4] i'm not quite sure about the 'dark' as there is no hanja (it is usually 'female' but I don't think that's it), but given the context, that's what it seems to be

[5] this is (one of) the krn word for 'monster', but I wanted to distinguish it from the 'monster' (the eng word transliterated into krn) used to describe the living things in dungeons

Chapter 52: Chirp (1) >

< Chirp (1) >

It wasn't easy holding back the urge to turn back now at least. It felt like I had become a horror movie character who had to pretend to the end that they couldn't hear the creaking footsteps coming closer from behind.

'I'm still using Lizard Stuck on the Wall.'

Just in case, I had been using it slightly since before we arrived at Seseong Guild. Since Yoohyun, who knew the normal me, could only feel it faintly, no matter how impressive Sung Hyunjae was, he probably wouldn't be able to easily notice. Would he do something like pressing his nose to my body and smelling me, like that little brother?

“Ah, Guild Leader!”

Kang Soyoung finally noticed and turned around, so I could turn and look as well. A man who looked a lot younger than his age despite fast approaching forty, was wearing a light attire. The shirt with the sleeve buttons undone had its sleeves rolled up about halfway and he didn't have anything like a tie. He really seemed to have free time, so I really couldn't say 'oh, coming all the way when you must be in embroiled in work' and such to that appearance.

“It's a relief that you look healthy. I worried a lot.”

Wow, it was a kind expression and tone that caused goosebumps. If I was a little more naive, I might have quickly trusted him and been moved.

“Purposely coming out and inquiring after me, it is to the extent that I feel apologetic.”

I said, filtering out the inner feelings saying that it was burdensome so please go away. At my words, Sung Hyunjae smiled. S-Ranks were all so, but he really was quite good looking. Guys who had everything.

“You came all the way here, so how could I not come out? Above all, Han Yoojin-gun will raise my-[1].”

“Thank you very much for being concerned over me!”

Fuck, Moon Hyuna really, really! Did I have to live hearing this kind of thing! I’ll properly retaliate. Shit, just you wait. If I didn’t pay this back, I wasn’t human.

Just then, Peace, who had heard me shout, quickly came running over. Then, he looked straight up at the newly appeared person.

-Kkeuoooong

Maybe he had felt some kind of apprehension because he stuck right to my leg. Seeing that appearance, Kang Soyoung gestured toward Sung Hyunjae, saying it’s okay.

“Don’t worry, Peace. This is my Guild Leader. He isn’t danger... uh, scary, um, so... he’s a nice... not that either.....”

...So this young lady couldn’t lie, huh.

“Anyways he’s a good person!”

It seemed like, as a guild leader, he was indeed a good person. If Peace could completely understand people’s words, wouldn’t he have stepped back a couple steps? But since he couldn’t, he just tilted his head, going ‘what are you talking about’.

"It's okay. We're on the same side right now. So you can go play."

"Though I'm planning on us staying that way."

Sung Hyunjae said at my words, with his voice full of laughter. What planning on staying that..... Did Haeyeon and Seseong happen to join hands? Yoohyun's attitude today was kind of weird. Even if he was at the height of his youthful vigor, his title was guild leader, so it definitely couldn't have been just Kang Soyoung's influence. Did they have something like a conference in secret?

"I feel relieved even with just your words."

"It's a tone that says you can't trust me."

"It is because I have lived to now difficultly, in my own way."

Even if you excluded the 5 years before the regression, it wasn't a peaceful life. It wasn't just one or two people aiming for the barely few possessions left to the children. The world was quite rough.

"Han Yoohyun, that guy, protecting is good, but you have to properly give information."

Sung Hyunjae tsked and shook his head. I was thinking that this ahjussi would badmouth Yoohyun, so I was a little agitated, but I held back at 'information'.

It was true that Yoohyun really didn't tell me much at all. On top of that, I was the person directly involved in the kidnapping, but afterwards, I didn't know a single thing about how it was being handled. When I asked, he glossed over it saying 'hyung doesn't have to worry about it, it's being handled well'.

If I hadn't had regressed and had gotten just a real magic rearing skill, I might've been shut up inside, spacing out, thinking that negotiations or whatever, my little brother was taking care of it all, not knowing anything about the situation taking place. Thinking of that, I had slight goosebumps.

"My brother, does have a frustrating side."

"Though he doesn't usually."

.....Did I have to drink with that little brother once again? I was being tackled day in and day out. I did think that both that guy and I needed a place where we could have a candid conversation.

"If it's okay, will you sit for a bit and talk?"

Sung Hyunjae said, seeing me with a bitter expression.

What should I do?

I wasn't planning on continuing to pretend I didn't know anything. It was my goal to be a peaceful landlord, but I did need to exert the minimum effort in order to protect what I had.

But right now, I was staying inside of Haeyeon Guild, where my little brother had eyes and ears everywhere, so I couldn't pull anything. It wouldn't be hard to reel in the future's information dealer Do Hamin, but it should be after I had built my nest.

Far from building the building yet, it was even before the demolition, so should I hear a little from the Seseong Guild Leader's mouth?

"Yes, that would be fine."

I nodded my head, putting on a smile that said I didn't know anything.

We moved the table at the pergola on one side of the park. Kang Soyoung left, saying that she would bring over some refreshments. Maybe Peace had zero faith in Sung Hyunjae because he didn't play anymore and came up to my lap and sat. Still, there didn't seem to be any sign that he would excessively cling like before. It seemed like coming out for a walk did have an effect.

“There are parts where I don’t really understand Han Yoohyun’s recent behavior.”

Sung Hyunjae said in a characteristic easygoing tone. The kid did get a little weird because of the keyword effect – was it very severe? Still, he let me go outside, and it seemed like he got a little better.

“It might’ve been different before you got the magic beast rearing skill, but the current Han Yoojin-gun has the power to possess and cultivate your own influence as much as you want. I think that as long as you properly establish yourself, you could become bigger than a decent giant guild. In addition, you’ve already gotten the groundwork down through the negotiations last time.”

What was this, he was overestimating me. Though if I wanted, there wasn’t anything I couldn’t do.

“But I do not have that big of a greed. And as I said the other day, the demand for familiars will also gradually decrease.”

At my words, Sung Hyunjae gave a small smile.

“Do you really think so?”

“...Would it not obviously become so? Outside of something crazy like using high rank familiars as single use.”

“Of course, probably nobody would do something like that. But high rank, highest rank familiars have similar combat prowess to A-Rank, S-Rank Hunters. Instead of as familiars, they could be used as team members, or even an monster combat unit.”

Well, it was indeed so.

“Monster rearing probably would only be permitted within a suppressible range. Even for Seseong, it will be hard to possess more than four or five highest rank familiars.”

Taming wasn't a skill that perfectly controlled monsters like some kind of puppet or robot. Even if you looked at just Peace, even though I had the owner's token, he would complain and act unexpectedly.

Tamed monsters didn't harm their owners, and followed them as if regarding them as their group's leader. It was just that. If you could perfectly control and manage them, tamers would have been regarded as Hunters that attacked dungeons leading a group of monsters. Instead of a special job that tamed and parcelled out monsters like now.

So, whether they were regular monsters or tamed monsters, the relevant guilds or organizations could only possess a suppressible amount of them, just in case.

“It’s like that now. But, how will it be in the future?”

Sung Hyunjae continued speaking, smiling significantly.

“Han Yoojin-gun. The things called laws, can only exist if there are nations and societies.”

“That is indeed true.”

“From when dungeons first appeared to today, the number and level of difficulty of dungeons have been gradually increasing. Right now, it’s at a point where dungeons can be fully managed with enough breathing room left over. And when Awakening Centers appear a while later, it will get a little easier. But how much longer will that breathing room last? Personally, if it’s long, then 5 years. If it’s about that much, considerably many things will change.”

...It was an accurate prediction. Of course, in even the 5 years later that I knew, the monster rearing limitation law was still the same. But if I thought about it, truthfully then, there was no reason entirely for the law to change. Since the highest rank familiars that would make it do so, didn’t exist at all.

The highest rank tamer skill was A-Rank, so even high rank familiars were rare. It was because you had to tame monsters with B-Rank and lower abilities, and then grow them, in order to make high rank familiars. It was about half luck, since not all monsters could grow

above their rank.

“.....Then are you saying that it could become possible to attempt dungeon attacks with just monsters, from now on?”

“Not to that extent; it would probably become mixed. Not as familiars, but as a type of different species of Hunters. And you will become the sole person to continue to stably raise S-Rank and A-Rank Hunters.”

I heard an ominous prediction that said ‘like this, wouldn’t you be unable to retire for your entire life?’. Why didn’t I think of the fact that the laws could change? No, but still, wasn’t monsters swarming around outside of dungeons precarious? Of course, it was better than high rank dungeons bursting open.....

“How should I say this, it is becoming burdensome.”

“There’s still time, so you can slowly take your place. Above all, unless someone with a similar skill appears, your worth is higher than S-Rank Hunters’. There’s no need to be hunched over like now, too. You can act however you want.”

“You are saying it is fine for me to act however I like?”

“That’s right. What’s anybody going to do if you act a bit high-handedly? It’s an ability that’s impossible to replace.”

Sung Hyunjae bent the corners of his eyes, impishly.

“You can do anything you want. Even if it’s not the guilds from the negotiation, if it’s a guild with the ability to possess high rank familiars, you could call any of them and demand all sorts of things, and they wouldn’t be able to say a single protest? Of course within the country, but also overseas. There are already foreign guilds lining up to try to talk to you. Should I give you one of their contact information? Do you want to try calling?”

“.....No, that is a little much.”

Contact any guild and demand anything? What was he talking about? It was a power trip that I hadn’t even imagined. Was it that a person who had lorded their power before could do it well? I was satisfied plenty with just getting one building.

“Your current position is that level. Try showing even a glimpse of ‘ah, it’s tiring so I can’t grow them’ after you take in highest rank monster babies. Immediately there would probably be contact from the line of guild leaders asking if you need anything?”

I mean, in terms of business ethics that was a little... This ahjussi didn’t have a good personality, as expected. Why was he sitting someone down and goading them to go on various chaotic power trips? Did he think that since sincere rearing and such were also in the negotiations, it wasn’t his business?

“This is something that Han Yoohyun definitely doesn’t not know, but despite that, he’s trying to be overly protective like a mother bird brooding baby birds. It’s an attitude unlike him.”

Sung Hyunjae said in a tone that said even he didn’t know up to this much well. That’s, the keyword... the caregiver was the same person, so it seemed like it was applied double.

“It might partly be because my stat rank is so low. Even if I am in a position to extensively lord my power, if some crazy guy lunges at me, I could be killed.”

“For that, it would be solved by keeping a highest rank monster next to you. At any rate, the idea of using Haeyeon’s second highest rank baby monster for your protection is also in the middle of being exchanged.”

“Is that so?”

“He didn’t tell you this either? It’s planned to be shouldered by MKC, taking responsibility for the kidnapping matter.”

It was a good condition for me, but Yoohyun, this brat, was really completely leaving out the person directly involved. He would probably tell me once it got determined, but still, would it hurt you to give me a hint ahead of time?

“I don’t know if this is similar to what Moon Hyuna did.”

Seeing my expression, Sung Hyunjae shrugged his shoulders. She had blocked sound with her skill, so did that mean that what Sung Hyunjae knew was what Moon Hyuna told him herself?

“No, it is a little different from that. I also feel that my younger brother’s actions are excessive. Still, he was worrying about me, and he would not be able to interfere if I happen to come out of Haeyeon again, so I was turning my eyes from it.”

“I recommend properly talking it out.”

“Yes, I will certainly do so.”

While we were talking about other things, Kang Soyoung returned holding refreshments. Even just looking at how they looked, they were high class and excellent tasting snacks, but they felt a little short compared to what Myeongwoo made for me. Thinking of how he would get busy after getting the Forge skill, I was starting to feel depressed again.

“This is a little bit of sincerity.”

Sung Hyunjae handed over a small accessory box with a certificate attached to it.

“You might have heard from Soyoung, but we will soon be indebted to you, so think of it as something meaning please take good care of us.”

Was it a bribe? Seeing the certificate, it was as much as an S-Rank item. It was Mana integer increase with a B-Rank shield skill effect added to it. Wow. It was B-Rank, but to think that it was a skill effect item. Skill effect items were really rare, whether then or now. When I opened the accessory box, it was earrings similar in shape to the Black Fairy’s Earrings that were stolen. It was only different in that the color of the gems were red.

“It is a little burdensome[2].”

“It has to be burdensome for there to be an effect. And this.”

Then, what he took out of his inventory was some large wing bone. At the appearance of a well dried wing bone that had a little bit of meat stuck on, Peace pricked up his ears.

“Most high rank carnivorous monsters like dragon bones.”

It was the first time I had heard of that. Without a single bit of hesitation, Peace immediately bit the dragon wing bone that was held out. Seeing him pull it over with his front feet as if he was going to hug it, it seemed like he really liked it.

.....Sung Hyunjae, this ahjussi, he might be a better person than I had thought.

Early in the morning, a message came informing of the success in purchasing an exclusive entrance pass for an F-Rank dungeon 20 minutes away from the Haeyeon Guild building by taxi.

It was a dungeon requested two nights ago. Purposefully adding more money to bid for monopoly for a low value F-Rank dungeon was rare, so there were no competitors.

As soon as I got the message about the completed exclusive entrance pass purchase, I contacted Yoohyun and told him I wasn't going to go out and was going to rest at home. When I told him I felt a bit like I was coming down with a cold, so I was just going to take some medicine and sleep, I had a hard time stopping him from coming to find me. I also told him keep it a secret because it would be annoying if other people knew.

"When did I buy these kinds of things?"

I was wondering if I had anything to cover my face, so I had rummaged through the luggage I had stopped unpacking halfway through, until a sun protection hat appeared. It was something that covered everything except the eyes with fabric, so it looked like I definitely wouldn't have my face discovered. Why did I buy it? Was the sunlight last year really hot? Or was there something that needed me to cover my face?

It was a little early, but it was the beginning of summer, so it seemed like it wouldn't look too weird to go around wearing it.

I had packed the gate stone in my inventory, and had enough equipment. Even though they were only integer increases. I also had plenty of potions and I probably wouldn't need to take an emergency food supply. Even if I didn't come out halfway and did an attack, if it was my current rank, it would probably take around one hour.

'It was a forest environment, right?'

According to the dungeon bid page explanation, inside of the dungeon was a small forest and the monsters that appeared were Moss Monkeys. It was a little difficult if I didn't have a long range attack skill, but I had the 4 meter tentacles, so I would be able to handle it in an instant. The boss monster was a giant turtle that was in a pond at the end of the forest.

With the agile monkeys who swung around trees and the turtle with high defense, for an F-Rank, the level of difficulty was high.

Maybe because of that, there was even a precaution added that they advised an attack with a team including an E-Rank or higher.

If it was possible, should I do an attack and come out? Since, if I monopolized it, there would be some left over even after making up the money used to buy the exclusive entrance pass.

-Geureureung

When I took the hat and went out to the living room, Peace, who was scratching at the dragon's wing he got yesterday, came bounding over while making noises. I scritched the region around the horn and then spoke soothingly.

"Dad is going to out for a bit, so look after the house well[3]. It won't take long."

-Kkioong

"And be moderate about breaking the furniture."

Myeongwoo would probably return in the evening, but just in case, I told him that I was going to leave Peace loose in the living room and take a nap. I told him that if I didn't pick up because I was sleeping, to not come into the house right away and to wait. Even if Peace was good, it was a little uneasy leaving him with a stat F-Rank.

"I'll be back."

I had worried thinking what I would do if he tried to follow, but Peace didn't go past the inner door and well-behavedly sat down and looked at me. He really was a good boy. There, now I just had to safely get out.

[1] bc krn is sov instead of svo like eng, the verb was left out and instead it was sth like 'hyj-gun (to) my child-' but since this has come up numerous times already, I'm sure the verb was gonna be 'raise'

[2] just wanted to point out that he means that it's burdensome bc he's receiving too much kindness/help, which is a common way to use the word in krn.

[3] this sth commonly said in kr when leaving the house

Chapter 53: < Chirp (2) >

< Chirp (2) >

Creaak

I quietly opened the door and came out to the hallway. The dorm floor security camera was still only at the entrance, and my place was on the inner side, so thanks to the winding hallway, up to here didn't stand out in anybody's eyes and I could move around.

After searching the surroundings and firmly putting on the hat, I used Lizard Stuck to a Wall to its maximum.

It was originally a D-Rank skill without a big effect, but it was different now. Since the special skill that hid your appearance had as much as four times the effect. Even if someone was

A-Rank, if they didn't pay attention to their surroundings, they wouldn't be able to notice.

Still, just in case, I had already tried it out last night.

I had held my breath and stood still in a corner of the hallway while using Wall Lizard, but none of the A-Ranks coming and going recognized me.

'Yerim went to the Association, so I just have to be careful of that little brother.'

If I did happen to be caught, well, so what. Like Sung Hyunjae said, it was okay for me to be a little more assertive. I wasn't trying to do something bad, and what would that guy Yoohyun do with me being caught secretly trying to go out? Try to confine me like before?

It might've been different if it was before the familiar-related negotiations, but even if he was the Haeyeon Guild Leader, he couldn't do anything he wanted with my personal matters. He would probably just nag a little. Grumble 'can't you trust me', and get disappointed, being like 'as expected, there was something you were hiding'.....

As expected, I should strive as much as possible not to get caught; it was annoying.

When I went toward the elevator, I saw a Haeyeon A-Rank Hunter who had brought over a chair and was reading. I observed her as I stood quietly in a corner.

The door to the emergency stairs were locked, and if the elevator moved on its own, she would think it was suspicious. So I had no choice but to wait. For the cafeteria delivery person.

I had come out around lunch time, so it didn't take long for the elevator to come up. Then, the cafeteria employee passed a lunch box to the Hunter. In the meantime, I took the chance to enter the elevator.

"Thank you. Please have a good meal."

The cafeteria employee got on the elevator again. There was a security camera inside the elevator, so while the employee was covering the buttons as they pressed the one for the floor the cafeteria was on, I stretched out a tentacle and stealthily pressed the 1st floor too. Thankfully, if the elevator button was pressed on the relevant floor, then the inside button also lit up, so the employee didn't seem to think much of it. From the security camera's point of view, it would look like the employee had accidentally pressed it.

After passing the cafeteria floor and going down to the 1st floor, I saw the closed glass door between the lobby and the connecting hallway. This was the biggest problem.

I had no choice but to keep waiting for someone to come and go.

'It'd be okay as long as Yoohyun doesn't come out.'

Don't come, don't come, do your work. And if I delayed too long, Yerim could return too. If only someone would quickly come in or go out.

Thankfully, it wasn't long before a Haeyeon B-Rank Hunter came over. As soon as the security room opened the glass door, I quickly went out. There was one A-Rank Hunter stationed in the security room, but maybe because there were a lot of people coming and going, they didn't notice a hint of weirdness.

'If they don't have a special skill, of course A-Ranks, but even S-Ranks would have a hard time secretly coming in.'

The type of special skill that hid your appearance was extremely rare. The only known perfect hiding skill holder was just the Dokkaebi. Normally, only monsters had them and the Dokkaebi wasn't human either, so I thought it might be a problem of aptitude. Though, even if someone had one, if it was decent, it wouldn't be revealed.

I safely left the building, and followed along the street for about 10 minutes. Then I released the skill while in a gap between buildings, bought sunglasses at a nearby shop to completely cover my face, and then called over a taxi.

The F-Rank dungeon I soon arrived at, was a small building^[1] that was like it was hidden behind other buildings. It seemed like it was originally a small parking lot. Since the F-Rank dungeon that was hard to compensate for wasn't inside the building, the building's owner had good luck.

I went to the building surrounded by a special wall, put in the number I had gotten ahead of time into the keypad next to the door, and let it scan my Hunter license's chip. The door was opened and when I passed the short hallway, I saw a gate in a space that didn't have anybody. I wanted confidentiality so they had vacated the place, but security cameras were operating. And they would have checked the number of people, too.

Entrance records were stored for one month to prepare for any case. Other people wouldn't check.

'Then, should I try going in?'

It was an F-Rank, but since I was going to go into a dungeon alone, I felt strange. I didn't hesitate long, and quickly stepped into the blue gate.

-Kkiik! Kkiii!

The air abruptly changed. I heard some unknown beast's noise between the heavy shade.

I took off the hat, hung its cord around my neck, and passed it over to my back, and then took off the sunglasses too. Against the monsters here, not having anything on should be enough. Still, I was wondering whether I should take out my equipment and put them on, when I just took out and put on only a Strength increase bracelet on top of the earrings that I was already wearing. They were just integer increase, so they wouldn't have a big effect, and it would be annoying to wear them.

‘Should I also prepare some ratio increase equipment too?’

Since a similar event could happen. I didn’t have many keyword applied targets yet, but as I steadily raised monsters and the number increased, there could be a case where an unfortunate accident happened. I didn’t want that, but it wouldn’t never happen.

I should be resolved to it.

Rustle

I sensed motion on top of an overgrown tree. Then, a green tinged face popped out between the leaves.

-Kkiok! Kkiok!

It was a Moss Monkey. I used Thorn Trap toward the monster that was inspecting me.

-Kkik!

It was an F-Rank dungeon monster, so it obviously couldn’t even resist and fell forward, but

it was still breathing. And it caught on the tree branches so it didn't even fall.

As expected, Tentacles would be better than Thorn Trap. The densely packed trees in the surroundings looked much higher than 10 meters, but they got thinner the higher up, so the big and heavy monkeys would only be able to move around at the thick middle and lower branches. So, the length was enough.

If it didn't work, then I could pick up a rock and throw it. As an experiment, I picked up a pebble and spread a little poison on it and then threw it.

Puk!

Along with a dull sound, the monkey stuck on the branches fell to the ground. It really was good having a high stat rank. With my usual strength, it would've been impossible to make it fall in one stroke.

Maybe because the rock had split its head or maybe because the poison permeated through, the Moss Monkey stopped breathing soon.

'Do I have to look for the magic stone or not?'

I didn't want to search the corpse. Before the regression, that would have been talking high and mighty, but now it was annoying. And my clothes could get dirty too.

‘Won’t contact start to come?’

I opened and closed my status window several times but there was no change. In the meantime, another Moss Monkey approached so I grabbed its neck with the tentacles and broke it.

‘.....It wouldn’t be that it was actually done with the ‘checking done’, right?’

If they didn’t have any other business with me, it might be relieving and it might be frustrating.

It was just then. Finally a message window popped up.

[N°C ¥µЯ FΔ μ L°]

.....Not, your? Fault? Did it mean me? That it wasn’t my fault? What nonsense was this suddenly.

Then, a new message window popped up. This time, they were proper letters.

[Wish Stone – Myth Grade

Grants one wish for the user.]

It was the wish stone item explanation window. Why this again out of the blue.....

Wait. It was only two lines. Originally it was three lines.

.....Fuck?

“You said a dead person couldn’t be revived!”

Was it not like that?! Could it be that the person who made the system pulled a scam? And normally it’s possible? Huh?

“Shit, no wonder, it could turn back time, so not being able to simply save one dead person really was weird...”

I was fooled, deceived.

I was angry for a moment, but I calmed down soon.

Truthfully, turning back time actually was better in various ways than saving Yoohyun that time. Not just for me, but also overall.

Even with just Suk Hayan's research results being distributed impartially, it would become a much safer world than the original 5 years later. Adding to that, there were even familiars, so it was obvious that it would change a lot toward a better direction than the chaotic original future.

So, being deceived itself was okay, but.

‘.....Saying that it wasn't my fault.’

Returning to the past was because the person who made the system deceived me, and it meant that it wasn't my fault.

Then this, so...

‘.....Does it mean problems could occur because of the regression?’

They were probably purposely telling me this because there was a problem that would make me go ‘ah, could this be my fault?’. They sure were friendly.

So what problem was it.

I waited for a while but another message window didn't pop up. For now, let's sort this out.

I was fooled by the guy the-rest-omitted system and returned to the past. System guy knew about before the regression, like me. Due to the regression, some problem was going to occur.

It was roughly those three things.

And if you added one more thing, it was clear that when system guy sends me a message that isn't connected to the system, they can't use normal text. Though I noticed that since they started writing vertically.

The limitation was lesser inside dungeons, but still, it meant they could only send indirectly. If they sent messages directly, errors appeared like last time.

Anyways.

"So exactly what kind of problem is going to appear? Tell me properly!"

I was frustrated to death. Just then, a message window popped up again.

[👉'≠'👈 ππππππ(._.)]

Just draw a picture why don't you. Was it that their mouth was blocked so they couldn't say?

"Even if a problem appears like last time, this time I can take care of it so just say it!"

I was right in front of the gate and was already using Wall Lizard to its maximum. Unless something like the Lauchtas jumped out, I could run away without a problem.

Shortly after yelling that.

[Oh no, my dear[2], don't get mad. We also know it's frustrating. That's right, we want to refreshingly tell you too, but it's that we can't. For direct conversation, there needs to be a sacrifice. And preparation too. Last time, the newcomer—time being turned back was just for your side. Dungeons are separate. And we are blocking to delay the progress. The more interference there is, the faster it is caught. If the related information. Gets well known. Danger. Properly. Prepare. One week. Dungeon.]

The messages poured out. Wait, slowly. What?

Time turning back was just on our side and the dungeons were separate. In other words, it should be the level of difficulty and number from 5 years later, but they were in the middle of delaying the process.

.....Did it mean that the dungeon level of difficulty would rise faster than before? That's crazy? And what was that about being caught? Did they mean there was something else?

It looked like they were telling me that the preparations would take a week and to come back to a dungeon again, but if it was after one week, the Repayment duration time would have ended. I did tell Yoohyun that I wanted to go to a dungeon, so I could ask him.

Just then, the message window shook heavily and started to become distorted. As expected, it seemed like they had forcefully sent the message.

On top of that, even the surrounding background blurrily wavered like a summer's heat haze. It was an atmosphere like something incredible would appear.

Thankfully, the gate activation still hadn't ended, so I was going to directly go out without using the gate stone when,

Drop

Something white and round dropped from the air. The chubby sticky-rice-cake-like thing rolled before opening its beak wide while upside down.

-Chirp!

.....What was it, cute.

-Chirp!

It cried again. The two legs raised to the air flailed. Fluff like a single dandelion seed, tiny round black eyes, light yellow beak and feet... a baby bird? The size was at most that of two fists combined, and no matter how I looked at it, it was a completely harmless appearance.

-Chirp chirp!

Flap flap

.....Fuck, look at the wings. They're tiny. What was that? Did that really come out? It didn't seem so. Didn't it just fall from a nest on a tree?

With a baffled heart, I used the Seed-Leaf skill.

[□□□□□ – □□□(Juvenile)

Current stat rank F

Growth possible stat rank □

Optimized initial skills

□□□□□□ Achieve after growth

□□□□□□ Achieve after growth

□□□□□□ Achieve after growth

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※□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□]

.....It looked like it was a kid that popped out through the error. Outside the fact that it was currently F-Rank and a baby, there wasn't information I could understand. But looking at the number of optimized initial skills, it definitely didn't seem to be a normal monster. There were five.

Even possible Awakening stat A~S-Rank Peace and Yerim only had three or four. Seeing how

there was only one rectangular space, it didn't seem to be SS or above that, so was it S-Rank? Though there was no guarantee that those spaces and the number of letters were in accordance.

‘.....What should I do?’

Was it okay to just leave error monsters alone? But to kill it, truthfully... I really didn't want to do that.

In the meantime, the baby bird that had succeeded in righting itself was tottering around in the grass thicket. Maybe because I was using Wall Lizard, it seemed like it hadn't noticed my existence. Instead, it discovered the dead Moss Monkey and went toward it.

-Cheep cheep cheep cheep

Chattering something, it was going to disturb the monkey corpse with its beak, oh! That was poisoned! If a stat F-Rank just touched it, it was instant death!

“No!”

-Chirp

When I ran over and quickly snatched it up, it froze for a moment, maybe from surprise, and

then vigorously flapped its small wings.

-Cheep! Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!

“It’s okay, I’m not going to hurt you.”

I quickly lifted the Wall Lizard skill and soothed it. Thankfully, it didn’t seem to have caught the poison. The tiny black eyes, blink, looked up at me.

-Chirp!

“Okay, okay. Be good. Chirpie[3].”

It was really soft and warm. Cute. What should I do? Should I just take it with me? If it was this size, I could just hide it in my arms and go.

If I was asked where it came from..... could I just say I picked it up? I don’t know, I’ll insist or whatever.

“Want me to give you a magic stone? Do you want to eat it? Is a C-Rank magic stone too much for a stat F-Rank?”

It might get sick. But I didn't have F-Rank magic stones. No, it wasn't that I didn't. When I lifted my head, I saw a Moss Monkey peeking from the trees.

It looked like I had to catch them without using poison. Just wait a bit, Chirpie. I'll prepare your food.

[1] I know there's a lot of 'building's in this paragraph, though the *krn* switches between the *krn* word (meaning any constructed structure that people work/do things/live in) and the *eng* word transliterated (tend to mean more 'big/tall buildings'). But it doesn't do something like sticking to the *krn* word just for the dungeon structure, for example, in the following sentence. It was like this: 'Since the F-Rank dungeon that was hard to compensate for wasn't inside the building(*krn*), the building(*eng*)'s owner had good luck', so I didn't really differentiate between the two. The word building, in *eng* with the *eng* definition, sounds like it implies something manmade and that you can see entirely, in my opinion, so to me 'structure' (much more vague & therefore includes an unknown-system-made gate/portal that leads to a different space) would've sounded better in *eng*, but I don't know if that connotation is true for the *krn* word. And again, there seemed to be not much difference in the usage between the *krn* and *eng* word so I translated both as 'building'. Also by saying that the dungeon was a building, it might have meant the surveillance building/structure that is built around a dungeon when it is discovered.

[2] I don't know if relevant but 'my dear' was in *eng* transliterated to *krn*

[3] so what the bird is saying, and the title of the chapter, is 'bbi-ahk' (i.e. like that bird monster in chapter 20-something), which is closer to 'peep' in *eng* because in my opinion chirp is like a normal bird talking and peep is a weak noise that a baby bird makes, which is what 'bbi-ahk' is. However, as you can

see, yj names it that here, and 'peep' or 'peepie' didn't seem like a viable name, same with 'cheep'. Also, yj named it the noise itself, nothing added, but that doesn't really sound right in eng, so I added '-ie' to the name. Fyi what I've tl'd as 'cheep' is just the 'bbi' part of 'bbi-ahk'.

Chapter 54: < Chirp (3) >

< Chirp (3) >

-Kkiook!

Puuhk!

The Moss Monkey that got its head crushed fell from the tree. At the same time, Chirpie on top of my head flapped its wings.

-Cheep cheep! Cheep cheep!

It was a sign that the monkey killed just now had a magic stone.

I had found two F-Rank magic stones and fed them to it, and afterwards, when I caught monkeys with magic stones, it started to chirp as if asking for them. It seemed like it was feeling the presence of magic stones.

“Chirpie, you’re more of a big eater than I had thought.”

With this, it was already the sixth, but it was still flapping, saying it would eat. On top of that, unlike Peace, it didn’t even touch meat and only ate magic stones.

-Chirp! Chirp!

“Alright, alright.”

It hadn’t even been thirty minutes since you met me. But seeing how it was sticking right to me and even pressing for food, the kid was a bit shameless. Was it too young to distinguish people’s individuality[1]? Or was it that it regarded anyone as its parent if they fed it?

Moss Monkeys’ magic stones were usually around below the nape. When I took a knife and cut the skin, above my head, it was really tap dancing.

-Cheep cheep cheep! Cheep!

Ugh, blood splattered. Even though I was careful to the upmost, I couldn’t help but get, of course my hand, but also the sleeves to the elbow spotted with blood. I should wash at the pond or something before I go out.

I passed the magic stone over to the beak of Chirpie, who had come down to my shoulder

in the meantime. It was small because it was an ordinary F-Rank monster magic stone, but it was still a size that was hard to swallow in one gulp, and yet it went down really well.

-Chirp!

“Are you going to eat more?”

-Chirp!

I didn't know what it was saying, but it didn't sound like it was full. Alright, let's see how much you can eat.

I thoroughly rummaged through the not that large forest, and caught and killed Moss Monkeys. During a dungeon attack, you didn't need to catch all the of the ordinary monsters. You just had to hunt over half of the entirety and catch the boss monster. But the more you hunted, the little longer the dungeon would be stabilized, so the Association recommended to exterminate as much as possible.

Technology that could accurately tell a dungeon's saturation state hadn't been developed yet, so in cases where you caught only half and came out, you had to separately report it.

I didn't feel the presence of Moss Monkeys anymore, so I went toward the pond. Chirpie, who had eaten up the magic stones every time they appeared, must have been in a good mood because it was humming softly.

“If magic stones were normal food, your stomach would’ve already burst.”

While eating everything I gave it, in the end, it ate an amount that was larger than its body. Even if they were magic stones, they should still pass through the stomach, so it seemed like the absorption was fast.

-Cheep cheep cheep~ cheeeep

“You’re a glutton, a total glutton.”

This guy’s food costs would be formidable. Even if it was F-Rank, exactly how much was it?

The pond that was at the edge of the forest was considerably big. In the middle of the clear water where lotus-leaf-like things were floating, there was a small green island.

-Gooreureuk

Maybe it had sensed us, because a giant Moss Turtle extended its head. The long canine teeth were considerably threatening.

-Chirp! Chirp! Cheep cheep! Cheep! Chirp!

“...My head is ringing. Calm down.”

As soon as it saw the turtle, Chirpie started to make a commotion. It didn't seem like it was frightened – was it asking me to catch it? Since it pestered me to give it magic stones after catching the monkeys, it seemed like it thought that that turtle's magic stone was extremely appetizing.

-Cheep cheep cheep!

“Okay, okay.”

I thought that the excited Chirpie would fall off or something, so I lowered it from my head and held it in my arms. In the meantime, the giant turtle cut through the water and slowly came over. If you came over, then I was thankful.

-Koouhh!

“What koouhh.”

Swish!

I grabbed the long neck by wrapping a tentacle around it and,

Puuk!

I pulled strongly and flung it out of the pond. The upside down turtle struggled. Not dragging it out, I cut the bent neck with a knife.

-Cheep cheep cheep! Chirp!

“I got it. Just wait a mome-.”

[Surprising achievement! With stat F, attack skills less than F, and using less than three items, you have successfully attacked an F-Rank dungeon by yourself!]

.....Huh? Suddenly why an achievement message window...

[S-Rank title ‘Miracle Rookie’[2] granted!]

Continuing, a miscellaneous items acquired window popped up. No, before that, what was this?

“Miracle Rookie?”

Was it a title you could get when you solo attacked a dungeon with stats and attack skills F-Rank or lower and using only a few items? The condition really was nasty. How could you get this? They should at least make it so that you can wear a lot of equipment.

Though I got it.

‘Did they consider it without the skills and stats from the Repayment skill?’

If someone had special skills like me, or had found a few high stat equipment with attack skills attached, I guess they could get it. Though who would do something weird like that. If you had equipment that could be used to beat a F-Rank dungeon alone, you should make a team and go to a D-Rank dungeon. On top of that, having that kind of ability meant that you were incredibly rich. Equipment costs should be in units of a billion, at minimum.

-Chirp chirp! Chirp chirp!

When I stood blankly, Chirpie went past urging to breaking out of my arms and jumping down. Then, it flapped around and dashed to the giant turtle.

-Chirp!

Ah geez, that glutton. Blood got all over your feathers. First, I cut the turtle's belly and took out the magic stone. It was a F-Rank, but it was a boss monster's magic stone, so it was considerably big. It was about the size of two fingers, so it was impossible for Chirpie to swallow.

-Chirp! Chirp!

"Ok, wait. I'll break it for you."

-Chirp, cheep!

When I was just holding the magic stone, it grabbed my pant leg by its small beak and stretched it. Why was it so greedy for food? I tsked and showed the magic stone to Chirpie.

"Look, it's too big."

-Chirp!

Chirpie, who had happily cried when it saw the magic stone, quickly bit the magic stone. Then,

-Chweep chweep chweep

Letting out gusty noises, it struggled to swallow it no matter what. Hey, would that go in?
Why don't you pass a camel through the eye of a needle?

"You'll die like that. Hand it over."

In case it would get sick trying to forcefully swallow it, I took the magic stone back. When I did, it froze as if shocked, and then it flopped down and,

-Cheeeeeeeep! Cheeep, cheeeeeep!

It looked up at me and started to cry loudly. It was a tone that said that it was upset to death because its food was stolen. It was dumbfounding and it was cute; where did this kind of pig pop out from?

I quickly broke the magic stone and scattered it on the ground. Then, it excitedly pecked and ate as if it hadn't ever cried.

I looked at Chirpie doing that for a moment and then opened the status window. I saw the newly registered title.

[Miracle Rookie(S)

A surprising beginner Hunter who solo attacked an F-Rank dungeon with very weak abilities.

Twice as many dungeon item rewards]

.....Wow, twice as many item rewards. It really was good. It was quite good, but I didn't need to do dungeon attacks.

'They're giving out these bauble[3]-like titles?'

Something like this was amazing[4] only if someone at least A-Rank got it. Especially if you went into an S-Rank dungeon, two S-Rank magic stones would fall out each time and there would be twice as many S-Rank items and if the first attack reward special items also fell out doubled, then it would be an incredible jackpot.

Giving this kind of thing as a title a stat F-Rank can get – were they joking around?

'Though, even if it's a low rank Hunter, it's better than nothing.'

Even if I thought about it simply, the income was doubled, and it would be much easier to find a team using this. If you did well, you could follow into even a C-Rank dungeon.

Though as low rank Hunter use, it didn't seem to be S-Rank level.

Would I be able to use it when the Repayment skill was initiated someday?

Outside of that, there weren't a lot of items. Maybe because they were rewards from a solo attack, they were good despite being F-Rank, so it was almost to the level of being D-Rank dungeon attack rewards, but they were common things.

'But this, if I attack a dungeon of a different rank by myself, would they give me a title as a reward?'

That was immediately captivating. If it was my current ability, I could beat up to a D-Rank by myself. A C-Rank probably would be possible too, but from there, it would get too big so if I went into attack by myself, I wouldn't be able to finish in one or two days. There also wasn't much time left for the Repayment skill, so it would be good to challenge up to a D-Rank safely.

'I'm a little sorry to Peace, but I should say that I'm going to rest at home for a while and...'

The exclusive entrance pass was the problem. Still, it probably wouldn't be hard to find up to D-Rank. If I couldn't find one, then that was that. First, let's just try.

"If you've finished eating, let's wash up and go home."

I washed my hands first and then took off my clothes and dipped them into the water. The blood seeping out spread over the surface and then disappeared. It seemed it would be hard to completely erase it, so it'd probably be better to wash cursorily and then buy new ones on the way and wear them before getting back.

I grabbed Chirpie too and dipped it in the water. When it got wet, it became about a quarter the size. So it was relying on its feathers, huh.

-Chirp cheep!

I wondered if I had wet the baby bird too much, but when the water was shaken off lightly, it became fluffy. Convenient.

Just in case blood drops had splashed onto my face, I washed my face too. When I doused myself with cold water, the inside of my head felt like it became clear.

At the same time the message content that had been pushed back for a bit came to mind.

'Do I have to move more actively?'

I had thought the speed of the dungeons' level of difficulty rising and number increasing would definitely be the same as before the regression.

But apparently it wouldn't be.

They said they were delaying the progress, but it seemed like it couldn't help but get faster than before.

'The familiars could cover it to a certain extent... but instead of monsters should I pay attention to people?'

The person who made the system – no, since they said 'we', it was people – tossing me the quest to fill up with 50 S-Ranks seemed to mean telling me to prepare by raising S-Ranks. Since, if I found and raised Hunters that originally couldn't reach S-Rank and couldn't get special skills, like Yerim, or possibly Myeongwoo, then it would be a huge help for combat power.

Of course, because the optimized Awakening was limited to 30 days, I wouldn't be able to use it often, but besides that, there was something else that I could do.

'Special skill Awakening Center.'

It was something I had briefly wondered about making and then stopped.

After checking optimized skills with Seed-Leaf, a facility that prepared that person's matching

environment.

If people who would just get passable combat related skills, were Awakened suited to their aptitudes, it would obviously be helpful in various ways. Even if they happened to not get their optimized skills, if it seemed like a waste, I could apply the keyword and raise them, like with Myeongwoo.

“.....The problem is that I only have one body.”

-Chirp

I grumbled as I twisted my clothes to squeeze out the moisture. Fuck, how could I do that many things alone? Raising monsters, checking the aptitudes of people too, Awakening them, applying the keyword to raise their skills too, and also connecting the Dokkaebi and Suk Hayan in my spare time.

Was it ‘please work alongside child care’?

“Still, letting go would be worrying for the future.”

So what if I had a building. If an S-Rank dungeon burst nearby, it would be boom. Just see, if something like a 1st rank dragon type burst out, it would become a sand castle.

I had thought I would be able to live at least the next 5 years without worrying, shit. Why was my life so difficult?

Taktak

I loosely shook the moisture off my clothes and then put them on. I also washed the soles of my shoes. I only put on the sunglasses and the cloth that covered my mouth, and then put Chirpie inside the upside down hat and covered it with the remaining cloth.

“You definitely can’t come out.”

-Chirp!

The sound was similar to a normal chick, so people would probably think I put in a bird. If it was a person you couldn’t even see the outer appearance of, you’d think it was a baby of a big type of bird.

I quieted Chirpie, telling it not to come out again, and left through the gate next to the pond.

When I left the dungeon management building, I checked my cell phone first. While inside the dungeon, the phone would have been out of service, and the piled up texts were only from unknown numbers. If it was discovered that I had disappeared, as soon as I had come out of the dungeon, my cell phone probably would’ve gone wild.

Before going back to Haeyeon Guild, I dropped by a clothes shop and bought new clothes to wear. I purposely picked a slightly loose shirt and put Chirpie inside, and then tried using Lizard Stuck on the Wall toward a sales assistant. Thankfully, the sales assistant couldn't notice, of course me, but also Chirpie.

'Chirpie, please stay quiet.'

It just didn't need to make a sound.

Thankfully, after eating even the turtle's magic stone, maybe its stomach was full, because it was half asleep.

I safely came up to the dorm floor using a similar method as when I was leaving the building. The entrance's Hunter had put aside the book in the meantime and was knitting of all things. Maybe thanks to the high stat, the speed was really fast.

After reaching my house's door and searching the surroundings, I let go of the skill. I took off the hat and sunglasses, and moved Chirpie back to the hat. Now all I had to go was go inside.

'.....Is it be okay to put a baby bird and a cat together?'

Suddenly a worry came up. Peace was a unicorn subspecies, but he was as close to carnivores and the cat family as a lion, and no matter how you looked at Chirpie, it was a baby bird.

.....If I went in like this, wouldn't there be bloodshed? No, in the first place, could I even raise them together? If I taught them not to harm each other, would they understand?

'Even for monsters, they weren't all carnivores, and there should be natural enemies among them.'

So I had to think about things like that if I had to raise several, huh. If Peace clawed at a dragon wing bone in front of Seseong's future baby dragon, the atmosphere would be strange.

"What should I do?"

For now, I didn't think it would be good to go in defenseless. With my current stats, it would be easy to block Peace, but I only had one body. It would be hard coaxing and teaching them, grabbing Chirpie on one side and Peace on the other. Should I call for the entrance's Hunter for their help?

No, it would be good to get the help of someone acquainted with Peace. When would Yerim return? I was taking out my cell phone wondering if I should contact her, when I felt an approaching S-Rank.

“Hyung? You said you were going to sleep because you had a cold so what are you doing standing in front of the door?”

“...Then why did you come? I told you not to.”

“I wasn’t planning on waking you, just-.”

-Chirp

Chirpie cried. Yoohyun stared at me, the hat that I was holding. Um, I was caught faster than I had expected.

“.....A chick?”

“I picked it up.”

It wasn’t a lie. It was just that the place I picked it up in was a dungeon.

-Chirp chirp

“You picked it up?”

“Someone threw it away in a hallway. Or it might have wandered in. Anyways I picked it up.”

“Is it really a chick?”

That little brother had an expression full of suspicion.

“It’s not a normal chick...”

Ah well, I did need to tell him. I lifted the hat’s cloth and showed Chirpie while speaking.

“It’s a baby monster.”

“What?”

“F-Rank. It’s weak. Wouldn’t someone have picked it up, unable to kill it, and then couldn’t raise it so they threw it away? Anyways, I do raise monsters.”

Like someone who leaves their dog at an abandoned dog shelter or a pet dog cafe. Please

do not abandon your pets.

“.....”

“Just consider it’s that.”

Yoohyun let out a small sigh. I was the one raising it, so why were you sighing?

“Even if it’s F-Rank, it’s a monster, so get it tamed. I’ll call over someone tomorrow.”

“Okay. Before that, while you’re here, help me persuade Peace.”

“Persuade?”

“If I just thoughtlessly go in, he might mistakenly think that I brought alive food.”

After roughly explaining the situation, I covered Chirpie with the cloth again and then opened the door. Maybe he had already noticed I had come, because I heard footsteps pacing past the inner door.

“Peace, wer- will you be good?”

I was going to ask him if he was being good, but I quickly changed it.

-Kkiang!

I pretended not to see him jumping, asking to be held, and went to the living room. It would be better for the location to be large.

“Okay, Peace. You can’t attack.”

I said, holding the hat and showing it. Peace might have noticed something because he kept on looking at that hat since a while ago. His ears were perked up and his eyes were bright.

“It’s not something to eat, but your dongsaeng, your younger sibling[5].”

I slowly took off the cloth covering Chirpie.

-Chirp!

A white and round head popped up. When it chirped again, Peace’s eyes widened.

“Your younger sibling-.”

-Keureureu

Hm, as expected, he didn't see it as a younger sibling. In an instant, Peace bared his teeth and jumped up.

But right before the canines could touch the hat,

Tak

Yoohyun's hand grabbed the scruff of Peace's neck. Then.

Hwiik-

He threw him?! What, the hell.

...Han Yoohyun this bastard?!

[1] lit. 'distinguish it and me' where 'it and me' is one word that means 'him and me, or that side and this side'. Normally it's used when talking abt sides of sth, or sth like 'distinguish between friend and foe'. But in this context I think it means more like chirpie can't

differentiate individual autonomy, like how babies & kids are naturally self-centered.

[2] the title is in eng transliterated to krn

[3] lit. 'chicken ribs' where one of the metaphorical meanings is 'sth that is mostly useless but still a waste to throw away'. There's no exactly corresponding word in eng, but 'bauble' brings into mind 'sth pretty but useless' so I thought it would be close enough?

[4] this word is used colloquially as slang as amazing/awesome, but it originally means 'big success/win' so it's kind of a double meaning? So in the next sentence I tl'd it as 'jackpot'.

[5] unlike krn, eng doesn't repeat words for emphasis that often, unless you use a synonym instead, so in krn, yj said 'dongsaeng' twice, but I tl'd it like this

Chapter 55: Chirp (4) >

Chirp (4) >

"What the hell are you doing!"

In an instant, I was furious. Of course, not a single hair on Peace was hurt. He landed really lightly.

But even so, that didn't mean you could just throw him around. Look there, he was frozen, possibly from being taken aback.

“.....Huh? Why...?”

That little brother was also taken aback. It was a face that said he didn't know at all why I yelled. Looking at that, I was even angrier.

If I thought about it, this jerk barely had any interest in Peace. Setting aside the fact that he said he was going to kill him since he wasn't growing. At that time, he considered him as a normal monster. But now, wasn't it the kid that would become his familiar soon?

“Why would you throw the kid!”

-Chirp!

“Huh? I mean, if it's stat C-Rank, then that level wouldn't do any-.”

“Are you going to grab anyone and throw them around as long as their stats are high? Do you think that's a good excuse?!”

-Chirp?!

“No, it’s not like that but...”

“Don’t look down at me, and sit!”

-Chi-rp!

Yoohyun sat down on the sofa at once. But Peace, why were you sitting?

At both of them sitting on the sofa side by side and looking up at me with round eyes, the ends of my mouth automatically twitched. I can’t, hold back for now. Cute rascals.

“Hunter Kang Soyoung said that it would be her life’s partner, said even before her dragon arrives that she would take take of it like her own child. Of course, she had a lot of interest in Peace, too. It was the same with the Hunters from Breaker and Hanshin who came before. They asked about various things, and told me to contact them anytime if I needed something. On top of that, the Seseong Guild Leader even gave Peace a present. But what about you?”

While speaking, I got mad again. Supplying the kid’s food costs was basic among basic, and outside of that, there wasn’t anything he really did, this jerk.

“Because you think of him as a caught fish? Huh?”

-Cheep?

“It’s not like that...”

“If it’s not, then what? Don’t avoid my eyes and tell me properly, Han Yoohyun.”

-Chirp

And why did Chirpie keep on chiming in[1]?

“...It’s not that I’m not paying attention. It’s a highest rank familiar. Of course it’s good. And I’m looking forward to the day it becomes an adult. But that, how should I say it, even if it’s precious equipment, I’d maintain it thoroughly but something like giving a present-.”

“Equipment? He’s equipment?”

Yoohyun slightly avoided my gaze again.

“.....I think I was thinking wrongly.”

“You thought of him as equipment? Peace?”

-Chirp?

“I was wrong.”

Seeing him speak, he didn't understand a single thing. For things like this, he acted exactly as he did when he was young. Was it because he was still just twenty years old?

“I'm not telling you to look after him like he's your own child, like Hunter Kang Soyoung. But at the very least, you should get it into your head that he's an independent partner. Not equipment that you can handle however you like. Above all, you should know too that taming isn't perfect.”

“I do know, but it's a problem that, after going into dungeons two or so times, would be fixed... Or no, it's not. I was wrong. I'll do better from now on.”

The reply was completely unsatisfying but I couldn't make him give affection when he didn't have any. Should I make them meet more often at least now? Though like that guy said, once they went into dungeons together several times, camaraderie or something should form.

“Hug once.”

“.....With what?”

“What do you mean what, Peace of course.”

Yoohyun stared at Peace next to him, looking completely unwilling. Peace also stared back at that guy before turning his gaze to me.

-Kkioong

“...I don’t think he’ll like it much, though.”

“He likes being held.”

He didn’t even think of his larger size and pestered to be held to the point of making me tired.

When Yoohyun stretched out his hand while hesitating, Peace’s fur stood on end.

“It’s okay, Peace. He’s not going to throw you.”

-Kkeuooong

Both of them seemed really awkward, but it was good to see. Before the dungeon level of difficulty goes up, they had to become close friends quickly. I went to sit next to Yoohyun, and Peace immediately tried to move to my lap.

“No.”

When I raised my arm, he lowered his ears down and had pitiful eyes.

-Kkiiing

And then, I didn’t know what he was thinking, but he looked at Chirpie and gently wagged his tail.

-Kkeuoong, kking

“What, you’re not going to attack Chirpie now?”

Just in case, I picked up Chirpie, who I had set to the side, and showed it to him. When I

did, far from baring his teeth, he licked it once. Then he tilted to look at me.

-Kkiang

-Chirp!

“Our Peace is a good boy~.”

As soon as he heard he was good, he tried to come over to me again. This time I didn’t block him so he sat on my lap and curled up as if satisfied.

Did he think that I didn’t let him come over because he attacked Chirpie?

“Even if he pretends to be well-behaved, you can’t ever leave the two alone together. It’ll be hard for that chick to be safe.”

“Of course I won’t do that.”

You couldn’t put a bird and a cat together.

“Are you free in a week? I want to look at your skills while I increase my level and take Peace into a dungeon once while we’re at it.”

And talk with the system person too. After taking out his cell phone and checking his schedule, Yoohyun nodded his head.

“I think so. I’ll get things ready.”

Going into a dungeon in a week would be this, and now I should buy E-Rank and D-Rank exclusive entrance passes.

The time period for the Last Repayment skill had exactly four days left now. It would be uneasy to go into a dungeon on the last day, so it was actually the same as three days. For exclusive bids, if there weren’t any competitors, after 24 hours, it was a win, so if I was lucky, I would be able to attack both within the period.

I was looking forward to what title would come out. A useful one better come out this time.

[OOO[2] Building will be demolished tomorrow, and in place, the monster rearing facility will be built. Many people expressed worries about many monsters being reared at the heart of Seoul, but-.]

A broadcast about monster rearing was coming from the TV. A building next to Haeyeon Guild was emptied up to today, and the demolition would start tomorrow. It wasn’t that there wasn’t any trouble, but thanks to the compensation being plenty, the work progressed quickly.

‘Apparently only a 2-story rearing facility would be newly built, and it’ll be connected to a 10-story building that’s already there.’

While lying down stretched out on the sofa, I inspected the building plan chart that was sent a little while ago. Peace on my back, and Chirpie on my head, had each taken their seat. If other kids tried to climb onto me, it would be tough. Once the Repayment effect ended, even if I had a lot of equipment, my overall body durability would be limited to about a mid level D-Rank. The hidden value would just be F-Rank. I would be able to handle up to Peace, but if there were more...

Should I eat the restorative medicine[3] that Kim Sunghan was sending me, at least starting now?

‘The planned time for completing construction of the rearing facility is two weeks – would that really work?’

Even if it was with mostly Awakened workers with provided equipment using dungeon byproducts, wasn’t it slapdash? They were making all sorts of predictions and pointing out drawbacks about the construction on the TV too. Still, it was a stance that said it wasn’t impossible.

‘It seems like they’re firmly building the foundation without a basement floor, and putting the training and rearing facility on the 1st floor. So building the foundation takes up the

most time, huh.'

Peace was small, but among monsters, there were guys that were big even as babies. And to prepare for possibilities, they were planning on making a space where adult monsters could stay, on the 1st floor. On the 1st floor, the facility that took the most money was the pen for adults.

And my residence was planned to be on the 2nd floor. Compared to the 1st floor, the area was much smaller, and the materials would be mostly dungeon byproducts so that even if the 1st floor collapsed, the floor would be fine. They were also going to put a mini portal for the entrance. The space remaining on the 1st floor roof would be decorated like a park, like my wish.

Anyways, apparently a ton of money would be poured into this.

On the other hand, the building that would be connected to the rearing facility was a normal building. Though a certain amount of remodeling would happen. Surrounded doubly with walls, the rearing facility would be made as a structure that could be entered through the building. The remodeling time for this building would be longer than the rearing facility construction time.

'Isn't it about time the Dokkaebi should come back?'

I had to get the data and meet Suk Hayan. And I didn't know whether Myeongwoo would follow me.

‘Since it would be comfortable to just be a guild affiliated blacksmith.’

With that guy’s disposition, wouldn’t he try to stay at Haeyeon? Still, there was no helping it.

‘Reeling in Do Hamin. The special skill Awakening center.....’

This time, I could say that a related skill came out after getting 20 levels. In order to prove the skill, I would have to bring over around two people and Awaken them into special initial skills.

The disgustingly good looking guy I saw at the broadcasting station came to mind. What was his name again?

But exactly what environment did that guy have to have to Awaken to get the optimized initial skills? If it was related to his face, the environment should already be exactly suitable. Wouldn’t he Awaken on his own if he diligently filmed movies and got popular?

‘For Awakened People with special skills, most of the cases were that they Awakened while continuously doing the related work.’

Or they Awakened if they felt danger for their life, and overcame the crisis with a related method. Would a monster see a person’s face and be captivated, and draw back? He really

was ambiguous in various ways. Should I find someone else?

[Magic beast rearing skill holder Han Yoojin-ssi, aka 'Monster's Dad', and the Horned Flame Lion juvenile Peace-.]

Ah, fuck. The previously filmed broadcast came up again as clips. Just why did they keep on showing that? If you were going to keep on putting it on, at least take out that 'monster's dad' nonsense.

-Chirp!

Chirpie saw the TV and yelled. Did it recognize me?

-Chirp chirp!

"Hey, where're you going? That's not real."

Its head was a little... bad, I thought. Then again, it was F-Rank, so you couldn't compare it to C-Rank Peace. Just then, while Chirpie was vigorously flapping in front of the TV, I heard the door open. It seemed like Myeongwoo came back.

"You're back?"

“...What’s that?”

“I picked it up. It’s a monster but it’s stat F-Rank, so it’s not dangerous.”

-Chirp cheep!

“It looks cute.”

“Right?”

Yoohyun, that guy, just sighed even after seeing that cute thing. Then again, he didn’t have much interest in animals since he was young.

Chirpie, who had given up on the me on the TV and come back, couldn’t get up on the sofa and was flapping again. As I raised up my body and picked up Chirpie, I checked Myeongwoo’s knife sharpening progress as a habit.

[Sharpening the blade of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 8,266/10,000)]

Now there really wasn’t much left. He would probably finish in four days.

“You’ve passed eight thousand for the knife sharpening, right?”

As my words, Myeongwoo’s eyes looked surprised.

“How did you know?”

“You sharpened a thousand on the first day, and after that, you sharpened four to five thousand, so wouldn’t it be around that amount? You’ve also told me how many you sharpened that day from time to time.”

“Still, calculating all of that...”

Myeongwoo had a deeply moved face. I really couldn’t say anything to this guy. He could just pass over it with ‘is that so’, but he kept on being touched so I felt like I had become a conman. I’m not that selfless of a person.

“I’ll follow you to the workroom on the last day. I’m curious what skill will come out, and it’s something I started, so I should be there with you around the end.”

“Yoojin.....”

He was touched again.

“Whatever comes out, I won’t forget your kindness.”

“If you’re like that, then I’m thankful.”

“I’ll really pay it back my whole life.”

No, that was burdensome. Just make me some side dishes sometimes. Snacks were good too. Or bread. Anyways, something to eat.

...Shit, should I just tell him we should live together? It was four days from now. I felt like I would cry.

“.....Myeongwoo.”

“Yeah?”

“.....No, it’s nothing.”

Heukheukheuk[4]. Leaving it like this, wouldn’t I be acting like a 2 o’clock boyfriend[5]? Rather than acting pathetic later, wouldn’t it be better to be embarrassing now? That’s right,

so what if it was little embarrassing? Eating was important.

Holding Chirpie tight in my arms, I opened my mouth.

“Later, even after you become independent... won’t you make some side dishes for me sometimes? The type doesn’t matter, just anything.”

I’m not picky, so I’m entreating you.

At my words, Myeongwoo froze stiffly. As expected, was it too shameless?

“Oh..... A-as expected, should I start to leave? Sorry. I troubled you for too lon-.”

“No, no. If we lived together, it would be good for me!”

Fuck, I didn’t know. Once four days passed, my dining table would go from heaven to hell, so I couldn’t hold back anymore.

“I can’t eat anything except what you make!”

“.....What?”

“So, please, provide me with side dishes.....”

After standing blankly, the ends of Myeongwoo’s mouth twitched. Don’t laugh. It was funny, but don’t laugh.

“That much isn’t hard! Okay, don’t worry. I’ll make them for you anytime. Do you have something you want to eat?”

“.....I like anything.”

“Alright. If you think of something you want to eat, tell me anytime!”

Going toward the kitchen, Myeongwoo looked like he was in a really good mood. Still, if you spoke that self-confidently, what would you do when you got busy later? Of course, he didn’t need to carry out what he just said without fail, but with his disposition, he would probably try to.

Ughh, I was embarrassed and my conscience was pricked, but I was happy.

I was able to receive the winning bid for the exclusive entrance passes for both the E-Rank and D-Rank dungeons the next afternoon. I had gone down to the training room with Peace in the morning, and then came back, so I didn’t need to make an excuse this time.

Myeongwoo hadn't returned home yet so I put Peace in the living room pen and Chirpie in a basket in my bedroom and locked my bedroom door. I sent Myeongwoo a text not to wake me because I was sleeping.

As I prayed to not get caught today either, I left with a similar method as yesterday.

This time's E-Rank dungeon was an underground cave environment. It was a type I personally disliked, but it was nearby, and while looking for places for which it was possible to buy an exclusive entrance pass, there weren't a lot of choices.

"Ugh, it's damp."

When I passed through the gate, damp air that seemed mixed with the smell of mold rushed up. In the darkness, noctilica were whizzing around. And.

[(' ✧ `) ㄹ ㄹ !!|ㅎ (· ˘ ·)]

".....Ah, yes. Hello."

What greeting was this.

[1] lit. 'put in 추임새' where 추임새 (choo-im-seh) are ad-libs done by the the person who keeps the beat in 판소리 (pansori, traditional musical storytelling) to boost the excitement,

so when this phrase is used like this outside of 판소리, it means someone keeps on chiming in to help rather than to interrupt. Think like greek chorus or like henchmen goons in old timey movies who are like 'yeah that's right', 'you say it boss!' in the bg every time their mob boss says sth. Couldn't remember if there was a specific eng term for it so I just left it as 'chime in'.

[2] censored like so in the original text

[3] like traditional herbal tonics that are supposed to be restorative and boosts your health and such

[4] crying noises, but the only crying noise I could think of in eng was 'boohoo' which is, ya kno, sarcastic, so left it romanized

[5] idk what a '2 o'clock boyfriend' is, and couldn't find anything when I tried to search it, so ... idk sorry guys

Chapter 56: < One Night's Curse and Poison Dragon (1) >

< One Night's Curse and Poison Dragon (1) >

Before I came into the dungeon, I had even taken off the earring, so my equipment was just one knife. It was the knife I used last time in the F-Rank dungeon to take out magic stones, and it was thin and similar to a jungle knife[1], and closer to an assistance tool than a

weapon.

I didn't know if it was limited to three this time, but to make room for error, I decided to leave one out. The equipment were all integer increase anyways, so if a situation where I absolutely had to use an item occurred, potion types would be better. To use just in case, I brought one vitality potion that I had received.

-Gigigik

Between the noctilica's lights, long antennae moved. Then, at the huge insect showing itself, my forehead wrinkled on its own.

An E-Rank dungeon with a good location, low level of difficulty, and even okay rewards, that was avoided. A.k.a. 'Roach Nest'.

The monsters that appeared weren't real roaches, but they looked similar to cockroaches. It was a dungeon I hadn't been to before the regression. Ah, I really hated it.

This time, who cared about the magic stones, I should just quickly attack and flee.

-Giririk

"Fuck, don't come here. Get lost."

I didn't even want to use tentacles, so I made it faint with Thorn Trap.

[° △ ° ∪|€W°Яδє ∩° ∪|€W°Яδє ^ ∪ ^][2]

...You get lost, too. Don't you have things to do? What was with the 'nice words' nagging.

This dungeon's usual monster, the Black Flat-Back Bug, was low in intelligence and strong in gluttony. On top of that, they were stupider than cockroaches, so they gobbled up well the food I openly poisoned. At the same time, the fact that they were strong in poison resistance was an annoying point.

Even so, they were normal E-Rank monsters. They were guys that couldn't have handled Blackie's normal poison, so if I sprayed that quadrupled, they would dissolve.

I took out a chunk of monster meat that was for Peace, that I had brought with me. This might count as an item, but even if it did, it was the second one. I had purposely brought the biggest chunk. It was fresh meat that was still soaked with blood.

"For cockroaches, it really would be insect bait."

I cut off about 1/3 of the meat chunk and put it in the middle of the road, and then I circled around it while spreading Sticky Poison. I applied it thoroughly on, of course the floor and

walls, but even the ceiling using the tentacles.

-Gigikgi

Rustle rustle rustle

Ugh, they're coming, they're coming. The group of black bugs crawled over as they moved their long antennae from side to side. When I stepped back, they rushed at the meat without even any hesitation, and,

-Giik!

-Kkik!

They stepped on the poison and fell over backwards. Whether their fellows died and fell or not, the giant roaches made the corpses into a bridge and stepped on them to cross over to the meat and bite into it. Because obviously I had spread poison on the meat, they also fell over backwards and shook their feet.

And the meat that wasn't that big also disappeared in an instant.

-Gigigik

Eujuk, kwadeuk, kwajik

Fuck, they were tearing into their same species' corpses to eat. I did know they were like that, but seeing it personally really was disgusting. The poisoned corpses made more corpses and stacked up on each other.

From time to time there were guys that tried to lunge at me too, but I made them faint with Thorn Trap.

'If I make about two more traps, they would probably be quickly exterminated.'

I should quickly end it and go home and wash.

Shit, really gross[3]! Why would you lay eggs while you die! And why did the babies hatch out immediately! And in that chaos, they were eating each other again! On top of that, the babies were exactly the size of cockroaches, but the numbers were enormous, so eurgh[4].

'I really get why people avoid this place.'

To think that you have to, fuck, sit in that crevice to find magic stones. Really, I hated the bug types the most among monsters. They really were disgusting, but also their secretions were dirty, there was poison at the drop of a hat, parasites jumped out, and even their

reproduction was fast.

I really shouldn't even look at something like a bug's nest ever again. Who cared about that title thing, sob[5].

'The boss was spiders, right?'

It was written that they did have poison, but that it was as weak as E-Rank, and to be careful of the spiderwebs. The number that made an appearance was three to four, and sometimes babies also came out.

Please let there be no babies, let there be no babies.

I begged inside my head as I went into the innermost part of the cave.

The smell of moss from the damp walls was thick. A dim light seeped through a crack in the high ceiling. Under that, there were giant spiderwebs and three giant spiders and.

Baby spiders swarming around.

'Ah, shit damn.'

There were really a lot. Incredibly a lot. Red and black stripes were slowly crowding around. I should have brought a lighter at least. To just set it all on fire. Though normal fire probably wouldn't work...

Suddenly, I wanted to see my younger brother. A flame skill for me too..... Or if Yerim at least was here. To freeze all of them. Guys who had wide-range attack skills had it good.

Grumbling, I circled the entrance coating it with poison. First off, I blocked off the escape route, but because of the spiders' characteristics, they rarely came out of the spiderwebs.

I picked up a rock that had fallen on the ground, spread poison on it, and then threw it with all my strength at the spiderweb.

'I probably don't have enough mana to use Thorn Trap on the babies as well.'

Did I have to kill all the baby spiders to clear it? I guessed I should..... use Wall Lizard and get close... get close... and spray poison or step on them or something. I sighed once and used the Wall Lizard skill. The king spider that was lurking in the middle of the spiderweb and scrutinizing me, was taken aback, its eight eyes darting around.

-Siii

The other two spiders also searched the surroundings. I walked toward the giant white tangled and entwined spiderweb, as I used Thorn Trap one by one on those three guys.

-Sik!

-Siik!

The spiders caught in the curse writhed and were wrapped firmly in the spiderwebs they themselves had hit. The surprised baby spiders scattered like a spray of water. A few of those were stepped on.

Pat, pajik

The exploding feeling made goosebumps rise up. I stretched the tentacles and pierced the shells of the big spiders and injected poison. The spiders that were trembling soon became still. Magic stones fell from the dissolving belly of one of them, so I picked them up with a tentacle. Maybe thanks to the Miracle title, there were two.

Please, achievement window pop up, escape gate come out, please.....

“.....It’s not popping up. Do I have to kill the baby spiders too...”

[ټ (· ▼ ·) ټ ☆ ټ ټ ★][6]

I was thinking they were being quiet, but they popped up again. I really couldn't say anything outloud.

"If you don't have anything to do, why don't you elaborate on the worthless[7] skill explanation windows? Instead of following me around like a stalker."

[crey.....][8]

.....What were they saying.

I swallowed down curses and killed the baby spiders running away here and there. Yoohyun, Yerim, I miss you[9]. They would be able to finish it in one blow.

Thankfully, maybe I didn't need to kill all of them, because when the appearance of the baby spiders became rare, the escape gate appeared. Then.

[Surprising achievement! With stat F, attack skills less than F, using less than five items, you have successfully attacked an E-Rank dungeon by yourself!]

So this time it was limited to five items, huh.

[S-Rank title 'Veteran[10] F-Rank' granted!]

'Veteran F-Rank', it was a title I didn't like. In the first place, no matter how much experience an F-Rank had, there was no way they would be able to solo attack an E-Rank dungeon with barely any equipment.

The me before the regression was a completely worn down F-Rank, but... no, nevermind. Even if I grumbled about something that had disappeared, what would happen? I opened the status window instead.

[Veteran F-Rank(S)

Extremely experienced superman as an F-Rank Hunter.

Attack type skills that you have doubled]

.....Wow, really, really, seriously, really.

For a while I stared at the sky, no the cave ceiling.

Fuck, I! Don't! Have! A single! Attack skill!

The number of baubles became two.

'No really, it is good... both Miracle and Veteran were effect worthy of S-Rank, but.....'

Why was it like this?

Double the effect of attack type skills. Doubled dungeon awards was great, but this was really, even if it was B-Rank, it would be a scam. If it was S-Rank, it was to the extent of asking if it wouldn't ruin the balance.

The SS-Rank skill Lauchtas' Natural Enemy was curse and poison dragon type restriction skill effect doubled, but this didn't even have a target limit. Maybe it was an S-Rank title because only F-Ranks could get it; if there wasn't a limit on acquiring it, wouldn't it have be about L-Rank?

Still, it was useless to me.

I had about ten skills but they were only assistance and resistance! Wow! If Veteran and Miracle counted as one skill each, then it would be twelve, hahaha.

"That I have' – since it had that kind of condition, it wouldn't apply to equipment skills. Would it be useless when Last Repayment is applied?'

To check, I took out the tentacles. The length was, hm. It definitely passed way over 4 meters. Then did that mean I was over A-Rank in terms of skills?

‘For the C-Rank Sticky Poison, unless they have an S-Rank poison resistance skill or item, even S-Ranks wouldn’t be able to handle it. Thorn Trap is D-Rank, so would it not work well?’

I would be able to directly incapacitate up to A-Ranks unless they had a high curse resistance. Even though my stats were a little lacking, if it was this much, I would be able to easily win in even a head-on match with an A-Rank combat Hunter.

Though there was only about two days left.

Since I was only going to apply the keyword to A-Rank and higher Hunters and monsters if possible, did that mean on the rare occasion that an accident occurred, it would be like ‘for 7 days, you can become invincible~’.

‘...Of course, it’s not that there are absolutely no methods.....’

If I decided to be heartless, it was a title I would be able to use effectively.

If I raised reasonably ranked monsters and applied the keyword, and afterwards, killed them

every 7 days. Especially if they were curse and poison dragon type monsters like Blackie, I would be able to become higher than A-Rank using a C-Rank, like now.

It was like that, but.

'If doing that was possible for me, I wouldn't have even regressed.'

Curse and poison dragon types weren't common, and if it were normal monsters, I would soothe them and coax them and feed them and give a love ballad for days and days, and then stab and, fuck, each time I would have to see a 'thank you for the magic stones you fed me' remembrance record, so was that something a person should do?

If I could do that without a problem, with that little brother dying, I would have prayed a couple times for his soul and then have become the strongest through the wish stone and lived well.

It might have been different if there wasn't the memory display at least; since it was something that caused a psychiatric hospital ending, let's just cleanly give up on it.

I sighed and then checked the attack reward items.

'Oh, high rank vitality potions.'

And it was revised to double, so there were two. Usually you could only see them in A-Rank dungeons and higher, and sometimes they came out in B-Rank dungeons as a first attack reward. An elixir wouldn't pop out as a D-Rank solo attack reward, right?

'If it was this level of awards for anyone instead of an F-Rank Hunter, it would be worth solo attacking.'

If it was at the level of this dungeon, even a C-Rank with okay attack skills could beat it on their own. But for some reason, it seemed like it went into an F-Rank Hunter's awards revision. It was too good for simply a solo attack reward.

Besides that, the items were also at the level of a C~B-Rank dungeon. Of course, it was doubled. I didn't pick up a single magic stone, but it was profitable. There were two C-Rank equipment too, and through the embellishment, four came out. The Miracle title really was pretty good. If only I could go through a high rank dungeon, it would be completely jackpot. It felt like a waste, anew.

'But these titles seem to be a doubling series?'

The F-Rank was doubled rewards, and the E-Rank was doubled attack skill effects. Would the D-Rank be stats doubled? Though even if it was doubled, it wouldn't have a big effect on the normal me. Instead of stats, if an assistance skill effect doubling came out, it would be great. Then raising the monsters would get two times faster, and I would be able to optimally Awaken people twice a month. And applying the keyword would get twice as easy too.

Please, assistance skill doubling for the D-Rank achievement title, I implore you. Let's fish out at least one properly.

"When did you go out?"

When I returned home, Myeongwoo asked, surprised. I raised the bag that I was holding in my hand to show him.

"Went to the convenience store for a bit. You didn't hear me go out?"

To get a definite alibi, I let go of Wall Lizard in front of the door, went back out again, and went to the 1st floor convenience store with the Hunter guarding the entrance.

"I didn't know at all. What did you buy?"

"...Cockroach killer."

"What? There's cockroaches in the house?!"

"No, it's not that there are any. Just for my peace of mind."

As soon as my eyes landed on a sale stand's cockroach killer, I grabbed it as if bewitched. And it said that it also had an effect on spiders. Insecticides were the best.

I went straight to the bathroom and took a shower. I hadn't heard of catching germs from a E-Rank dungeon monster, but still I used the body wash as if I would make it run out. If it were up to me, I would have doused myself with disinfectant.

After washing and coming out, I took Peace and Chirpie and prepared the kids' dinner.

"Chirpie, I told you this isn't for you to eat."

-Chirp!

I forcefully pulled Chirpie off the bottle containing C-Rank magic stone power that Chirpie was sticking to. Why did that tiny thing have such a large greed for magic stones? When I gave it F-Rank magic stones, it cheeped, dissatisfied, but it did take them and ate well. I had happened to pick up E-Rank magic stones; should I try giving it some?

"Here, Chirpie."

-Chirp chirp chirp!!

It really liked it. When I split the E-Rank boss monster's magic stone into thin pieces for it, it seemed like it would break out dancing. Peace ate exactly a certain amount, and then if there were any left, didn't have any interest, but this one was a bit unusual. It wolfed down the two E-Rank magic stones and then pulled the C-Rank magic stone powder bottle over with its wings.

-Cheep cheep cheep cheep cheep

"I said it's not yours."

Did I have to give it higher rank magic stones? It seemed like up to E-Rank was okay, and I should bring over some D-Rank magic stones tomorrow.

'.....What is it?'

I had to go into a dungeon again tomorrow, so I went to bed early, but while asleep, I suddenly felt The Weak's Premonition being roused. Did Yerim come to rob the kitchen again... stat S-Rank, and poison skill... hm? Curse skill? What?

My eyes shot open. At the same time, I saw a message window open.

[While against the Dio Valshesis[11], all skill effects are increased by 2 times!]

Crazy? Doubled? Curse and poison dragon? S-Rank? Did an S-Rank dungeon or something burst open in my bedroom? For something like that, it was too quiet? I was startled inside my mind, but perhaps thanks to the fear resistance, my body didn't freeze or anything.

As soon as my mind was clear, The Weak's Premonition pushed out the information. The premonition skill that had its effect doubled, figured out the opponent's location before my eyes did.

I jumped down from my bed, and used Thorn Trap right away.

"Hell- ugh!"[12]

.....Why did a person collapse?

[1] idk if they're called this in eng but they're basically long and curved knife/sword things that u used to cut your way through a jungle

[2] in case it's hard to read: 'nice words polite words'. It actually says lit. 'nice words pretty words', but it means to not use swear words and such, and eng doesn't use 'pretty' like that. Also, fun fact, instead of writing out 'word/speech' (말, pronounced 'mal'), they used the hanja/chn character for horse 馬, also pronounced 말 in krn. I couldn't do an eng equiv of that tho ☹

[3] he actually says 'I hate it' but that's used a little more versatile-y in kr. As in, in krn, it

makes sense in this kind of situation, but in eng, ppl would normally say things abt the situation/why they hate it (which u also do in krn, I just mean that in eng it's usually this rather than either), rather than just that they hate it. So I changed it to 'it's gross' since that's obviously yj's complaint here

[4] lit. 'eu-we-ek', it's a vomiting sound

[5] lit. crying noises ('heukheukeuk', which came up before) but I thought this would make more sense in eng? It still sounds a little sarcastic, but not as much as 'boohoo', and it's supposed to sound funny/lighthearted anyways

[6] alsdkfjasld I couldn't figure this out for the LONGEST time I swear I spent the most time on this anything in this whole novel as of yet. Like literally an hr in total spent thinking abt it, but longer than that bc I kept on moving on and coming back to it. It was 'π ∈ | ○' and I kept on reading it as 'π팅' (esp bc π was used as π already in a prev ch) which I thought had to be slang if anything bc π is a single letter not a syllable, but I couldn't find anything. But then while I was editing the ch it hit me that it might be w reading the greek letter as is, as 'π팅' (pi-ting), aka 'fighting' (there's no f sound in krn so it's pronounced pah-ee-ting), the konglish equiv to 'good luck' or 'do your best'. Jesus... anyways I tl'd it as 'GL' short for good luck

[7] lit. 'like a beggar' but used colloq to mean worthless :/

[8] they wrote 롬곡 which doesn't mean anything on its own (which is why yj is confused) but if you rotate 180 deg, it becomes 눈물 which means 'tear(s)'. Often used on the internet,

esp twitter

[9] lit. 'I want to see you' but it makes more sense to say 'I miss you' in eng, hence. Ik I tl'd it as lit. as 'want to see' just a few sent before, but idk it felt esp weird to keep it that way here

[10] in eng transliterated to krn

[11] idk if this is supposed to be some foreign word or a made up one. I'm like 100% sure abt the 'dio' but I just did whatever seemed the closest w the 2nd one. It's 'dee-oh bal-sweh-shi-seu'.

[12] in case it's not clear, they're about to say 'hello', not 'hell'

Chapter 57: < One Night's Curse and Poison Dragon (2) >

< One Night's Curse and Poison Dragon (2) >

Maybe they were using a type of hiding skill, because I couldn't clearly see their appearance. But the silhouette was definitely a human. And they spoke too.

Was it an S-Rank Hunter who had a hiding skill?

That wasn't in my memories.

I scrutinized the collapsed silhouette and went toward the basket that Chirpie was in. As soon as I picked up Chirpie, who was sleeping without knowing a thing, the silhouette jumped up.

“Wow, how thrilling. Darling, what was that? My curse resistance is S-Rank, but I had to put on a de-cursing item to finally pull free?”

It was a woman’s voice. The curse resistance was S-Rank – it was a little awkward for me to say, but she must be a fiend.

According to The Weak’s Premonition, she had stat S-Rank, S-Rank poison skills and curse skills, SS-Rank short-range physical attack skills, an SSS-Rank title... What was all this. She really was a Hunter I hadn’t heard of or seen. Exactly what kind of title was it that there were three S’s stuck to it?

Of course, the attack power could be nonexistent like my L-Rank titles, but it seemed like that possibility was low. Because.

[Awakened Person – Riette

Current stat rank S

Possible Awakening stat rank S

Optimized Initial Skills

Eternity’s Severance(SS) Acquired

Knife’s Path(S) Acquired

Dazzling Aura(S) Acquired

Flowing Cloud(A) Acquired]

Severance, knife, aura. No matter how you looked at it, they were initial skills that had nothing to do with curses or poison. In other words, the poison and curse skills she had were highly likely to be the SSS-Rank title's skills.

"What could you be looking at, our cutie[1]."

...I didn't like the way she spoke at all. With that name too; was she a Westerner?

'Setting aside stats, the skills are no joke. If the ranking competition existed now, she would be in the highest range.

Proximity combat aptitude and poison and curse SSS-Rank title. And she seemed to have a hiding skill too. Seeing how the Lauchtas' Natural Enemy skill was set off, the SSS-Rank title was also related to curse and poison dragons. It was Dio Valshesis, right? It was a monster I hadn't heard of, but just looking at the name, it didn't seem like a normal fiend[2].

"Darling? Why don't you show me a reaction already or something? Are you frozen from surprise?"

"If you have business, you should have requested visitation through phone during the day, Riette-ssi."

"Oh my?"

Right after the exclamation full of surprise, the blurred silhouette became clear. Showing her appearance in the darkness, was a beautiful woman with a cheerful smile. A bob that was cut short for activity was a dark black and the two eyes were a clear gold.

Gold eyes. The appearance of high rank Hunters could change strangely, according to their aptitude or skills, but that had too different of a gold quality to be called something that belonged to a human.

“How could you have known? My name. And darling, wasn’t it that you were stat F-Rank with nonexistent attack skills?”

She didn’t look an Easterner, but her Korean was proficient. It was probably thanks to the item hanging around her neck. It was a translation item that sometimes came out in S-Rank dungeons.

“Is it not basic for Hunters to hide one or two?”

“It’s not one or two, though? Just a while ago was a curse skill, probably around SS-Rank. And you seem like you have a skill that lets you read another person’s information. Weren’t you vigorously reading something?”

As expected, the Seed-Leaf skill was caught right away in front of an S-Rank Hunter. I lowered Chirpie back into the basket and smiled gently.

“It was a hidden card. That it did not work, made me quite disappointed.”

“It was just that the match up was bad. That it’s a skill that can incapacitate even an S-Rank curse resistance, is pretty impressive.”

It was doubled again through the Laughtas’ Natural Enemy. Exactly how many times did it rise again?

“First of all, can I assume that you do not have any intention to attack?”

Chirpie was right next to me, and Peace and Myeongwoo were nearby. It was better to avoid a fight as much as possible. And, if the skills were to that extent, even if Yoohyun came, the chance of winning wasn’t that high. A proximity aptitude with an S-Rank poison and curse – it was to the point of being evil.

Thankfully, she didn't seem to have the will to fight.

"Yes, of course. Above all, our natures really don't match. The curse skill that I sent as soon as I released myself from your curse – did you feel it?"

I didn't feel it. It was an S-Rank curse skill, so did it just disappear because it was too insignificant?

"My curse resistance skill rank is a little high."

But pretending I knew, I shrugged my shoulders. She held out both her hands as if answering.

"My curse skill is condition specialized, so it's weak to use during combat, but I'm upset that it didn't get through even a little bit."

Simple attack curse skills like Blackie's Thorn Trap were things that monsters usually had, and normal Hunters' curse skills were condition specialized. Used for inventory sealing or contracts and such, with usage versatility being high... wait. Could it be?

".....Did you happen to come find me because of ripping the contract?"

"That's right! So it was you?"

I mean, did you come just for that? I was dumbfounded. Looking at my expression, Riette quickly added an explanation.

"It's not just for that reason. I came because I also have a request. In the first place, I didn't even think that you had destroyed the contract. I was thinking about asking you if you knew anything about it, while I was at it. But seeing Han Yoojin-ssi's abilities... the kidnapping incident really must have been a trap for

MKC?”

It wasn't. But I put on an expression that said 'it could be so'.

“That kind of rumor seems to be going around, then?”

“There's talk that it's a matter schemed up by Seseong and Haeyeon collaborating together. Anyways, are you going to keep standing while we talk?”

Riette, who had walked to the bed, raised just one long leg and straddled it. Hey, this woman.

“Why don't you take off your shoes.”

“Ah, right.”

She obediently took off and threw her combat boots. She had cat-patterned socks.

“Aren't they cute? I bought them in Dongdaemun[3].”

“Ah, yes.”

“Darling, you're too dry. For things like this, you should know to come up onto the bed on your own.”

Then she lied down diagonally and waved me over. From the window, the moonlight... or rather the light from the opposite side building was dim, so the atmosphere was good, but I didn't want to use the bed together with an S-Rank Hunter I didn't know – an SS-Rank proximity cutting skill holder.

I thought it over for a bit and then went to the bed. I didn't lie down and just sat on the opposite side.

"An illegal contract being shredded – is that not something that you normally do not pay attention to?"

Was an illegal thing illegal without reason? There were cases from time to time when the other person had curse resistance and had prepared tons of de-cursing items before contracting. But even if she had a different primary purpose, to think she was going to purposely check.

At my words, Riette had a bit of a sheepish expression.

"That's because it hasn't been long since I started."

"It has not been long?"

"That's right. I just started the business so I couldn't help but pay attention. I only just got the curse skill ten days ago."

Ten days? Just that?

"Could I possibly ask how you got it?"

"Darling, you're grilling too much. When you're not even coming closer."

"You have learned my secret, so let us agree to each keep our mouths shut."

"Secret? Do you mean the stats and skills? They're things the Haeyeon and Seseong Guild Leaders know anyways."

“They do not know.”

At my words, she turned over onto her stomach. The two gold eyes turned big and round.

“They don’t know? Really? That’s a surprise.”

“If it is this extent, is it not a secret worth a trade?”

Although my card was about half fake. But if she found out the truth, she could guess that I had some kind of special skill. So it wasn’t that I was giving away a little.

“What should I do?”

“I also know that it is a skill that came from a title.”

“Wow, you really do have a skill that can check status windows. Darling, you’re too much. Okay. It’s a title I got after catching an S-Rank dungeon boss monster.”

“A Dio Valshesis?”

“I mean, if you already know everything, why are you asking?”

Riette pouted her lips.

“SSS-Rank title Dio Valshesis’ Twin. It’s a title that you can get when you catch the twin dragons Dio Valshesis with just your sibling from the same mother. My younger brother is also an S-Rank Hunter.”

As benefiting a high rank, it was title with a difficult condition.

“Could I also hear which dungeon it was?”

“It was an illegal dungeon from China...”

She slightly wrinkled her forehead and continued speaking.

“It might be hard to believe, but it disappeared after the attack.”

“It disappeared?”

“...You’re not surprised? It’s not a lie.”

“I know. I believe you.”

Twin curse and poison dragons Dio Valshesis. There was no way information about a dungeon with that kind of monster as a boss wouldn’t have been revealed in 5 years. So, obviously.

It was a dungeon that should have come out 5 years later.

The dungeon suddenly disappearing was probably because the system administrators took action.

‘So that’s why there was no information about such an incredible Hunter.’

If she was simply a female proximity attack aptitude Hunter, I had heard of her before. The name was different, but there were a lot of Hunters who didn't use their real names, so she should be the same person. It wasn't like S-Rank Hunters were common, and if their aptitude and gender were the same, then there was no mistake.

In other words, in the original future, Riette didn't get the the Dio Valshesis' Twin title. Since it was even before the relevant dungeon appeared.

...Would there have been similar things to this?

"You believe me? Really?"

Riette furtively came to my side. Looking at her from close, she really was a beauty. I was captivated by that face for a moment, so I was sitting blankly until an arm stretched out and wrapped around my waist.

"But darling, it's a little strange."

"...What is?"

She pulled my waist and stuck close. She lightly raised her upper body and touched her nose to my shoulder.

".....Are you possibly a dragon type too?"

"I am a human."

"But the feeling is... same kind? No, rather than that... being able to easily knock out something like a Dio Valshesis, hmm, a big shot kind of feeling?"

...I was wondering if it was because of Blackie's skills, but no matter how I looked at it, it seemed to be the effect of the Lauchtas' Natural Enemy or the Dragon Slayer title. Then again, Blackie also was frightened, so even if Riette felt a strange feeling, it wasn't weird.

"Darling, I'm getting a little excited."

".....Excuse me?"

"You smell good, too. Do you use cologne?"

I did use a lot of body wash. Before that, she was clinging too much.

"How about moving away a little?"

"Darling, you're really twenty-five, right? You're too cold."

"I am at an age where I can differentiate people as I go at them. At any rate, let us talk some business instead."

I figured out everything I was curious about, so it would be great if you left already. Riette roughly loosened her arm as if sulking and then sprawled out[4] on the bed.

"You're too much. Would it wear down that thing for you to chime in agreeably? At any rate, it's sad that normal people aren't drawn in."

"...They are not drawn in?"

"Yeah. They're not. It's the same as having become about half dragon half human, so the sexual

preference also must have changed.”

Is that so. That wasn’t right but it was another person’s business.

“Please just finish up your business and leave. I have to sleep.”

“So cold. You were cute when I saw you on TV. Speaking of, why is your face the same, darling? It seems like your stats are quite high. It’s still fine right now, but if it’s the level of getting compensation, normally-.”

“I did not get any.”

It’s the original.

“Then again, it hasn’t been long since you Awakened, right? My business is obvious. I have a baby monster I want to leave to you.”

“If it is that, please call during the day. You shouldn’t not know my contact information.”

All sorts of spam calls came, so could an S-Rank Hunter not find out my phone number? At my words, Riette widened her eyes.

“Are you pretending not to know? The guilds that negotiated with you have fire in their eyes, so how would I be able to directly call? Especially your brother is going around openly threatening people to not think of personally contacting you.”

Was Yoohyun going around doing that?

“Then you can come over directly?”

She bared her teeth in a smile[5].

“It’s just that, if I don’t get caught. You saw my skills. Originally, I wasn’t planning on showing my face. I hadn’t even dreamed that you could see through to an S-Rank Hunter’s status window. I was planning on secretly coming in and checking your intentions and secretly reeling you in.”

Then again, if you had a hiding skill, instead of using a traceable phone call, directly coming to find me was safer.

“So you want me to raise a baby monster for you?”

“If I openly leave it with you, it’ll come to light that I contacted you; can’t you make a way to connect? There’s a lot of people who are impatient other than me.”

She was pretending to be cute, going ‘please~’.

“Do you have social media?”

“Hm?”

“I will be making an account soon. Of course guilds, but even many Hunters use social media, so I will first follow and then contact you. When my social media account is made, please make a related post. And please give me your ID now.”

“Ah, I didn’t manage it properly though. Here’s my ID.”

After taking a piece of parchment and a pen from her inventory and writing her ID, she ripped it off and handed it to me.

“Thanks, love you~.”

Hearing the prattle that she loves me, suddenly the thought of applying the keyword to Riette too, came up. Because the effect was doubled, it seemed like it would work if I said it even once carelessly. It didn’t take long for even Blackie, who I couldn’t communicate with, so if it was someone who could understand the love ballad, it would quickly be applied. What should I do? Should I fill one empty S-Rank place and at the same time give her a growth buff sometimes?

If the growth buff was also applied doubled, it did seem like I was giving too much. First, let’s check if the keyword effect would appear.

“Do you happen to have someone you think of as a caregiver? Someone who raised you.”

“Hm? No. Not at all. Rather, I raised my younger brother. Speaking of, you raised your younger brother too, right?”

“Yeees, well...”

I did raise him. But looking at the results, I, just, well.

“.....Even so, he Awakened on his own, and went on his own road on his own.”

On one morning. He was right about to take the CSAT, graduate, and go to college. I had thought that if he did, my work would have been done too.

Ah, I just thought of it. The savings account I put away for tuition. There was no use for it so I had let it sit the whole time, and then I had cancelled it before going to meet the Awakening broker. So that was why my bank balance was bigger than I had thought.

“Darling?”

Somehow that will disappeared and I flopped down on the bed.

“If you have finished with your business, please leave now. I will sleep now.”

“Really just sleep?”

“Yes, I will sleep.”

I just closed my eyes. I felt Riette peeking from above. The gaze looking down, as well as.

“Han Yoojin-ssi, I’ll come to play again.”

“...No thank you.”

“Thanks. Sleep well.”

A light feather-like[6] touch brushed against my forehead and then left. There was the sound of shoes being put on, and then the door opening and closing. The Weak’s Premonition that had been noisy the whole time became calm.

It was silent.

I opened my eyes again.

‘...The system people really are working.’

On top of blocking the progress, they even erased a dungeon from 5 years later that popped out. Though it was already attacked. It would have been the first attack, so I wondered what rewards they got. Should I have asked that too?

‘During the 5 years, following the level of difficulty, the rewards also increased. Then again, compared to the title, a decent regression item wouldn’t be much.’

Dio Valshe’s Twin. If it was an SSS-Rank title, it was a rank that hadn’t appeared even 5 years later. That I knew of.

She said she had become about half human half dragon, so wouldn’t it have been inheriting exactly the Dio Valshe’s abilities, a type like that? On top of that, it was a twin title, so it was obvious both siblings received it.

‘If just the two of them caught the monster, as well as attacked an illegal dungeon, the siblings probably were acting with just each other without a guild or a team. If it were two S-ranks, it would be more than enough right now. Riette has a proximity attack aptitude, so would the younger brother be assistance, possibly healer? No, if he was an S-Rank healer, there would have been no way it wasn’t revealed, so the likelihood of him being assistance would be high.’

It could be a long range aptitude or on the magic side, too.

Anyways, both of them were at the level of being outside of rank, for now. It was one thing that it was a waste to just leave them alone, but it was to the point of being uneasy to do so.

Even so, should I say it was a relief that Riette was in a position to ask me for a favor? But, I couldn’t know how far that would go.

‘The keyword effect wouldn’t exactly appear for Riette.’

She was a curse and poison dragon type, so the application would be easy, but she didn’t have someone she thought of as a caregiver. If so, then as expected, I had to reel in the younger brother.

It was a younger brother raised by that older sister. Even if I didn’t see him, I could more or less guess his personality. At the least, he would listen well to his noona.

Since he was the same curse and poison dragon type, the keyword application would happen straight away.

‘I should ask her to introduce me to her brother.’

For the social media profile, whose picture should I use, between Peace and Chirpie?

[1] it uses the word for ‘pretty’ and means ‘person who looks or whose behavior is pretty and lovable’ but there’s no direct word for it in eng. ‘Pretty’ in krn can be used to describe the way a person acts, in which case it means more like polite/sweet, so I guess something like ‘sweetie’ could work too. ‘Cutie’ felt like it had the closest nuance, imho, though there is a word for ‘cutie’ in krn too.

[2] yj uses the krn word for ‘monster’, which I’ve been tl-ing lately as ‘fiend’ to differentiate from dungeon monsters (the eng word). Idk if there’s a special reason he’s using the krn word or if it’s just bc, but putting a footnote just in case

[3] it’s a large commercial district w a lot of shops

[4] lit. ‘lie down comfortably as the character 大’, i.e. w arms and legs askew/spread out

[5] lit. 'bit off a smile at the corners of her mouth'. It seems like a turn of phrase the author made up but I don't think it means 'bit out a smile' which in eng means 'reluctantly/forcefully smile', but rather more like 'smile wickedly' so I made my best approximation.

[6] lit. 'cotton fluff like'

Chapter 58: < Pretended to Forget (1) >

< Pretended to Forget (1) >

A small lake spread out in the middle of green plains.

Lake environments were rich in money-making resources, so they tended to be popular, but that was for C-Rank dungeons and higher. D-Rank and lower also did make more money. But underwater combat was too difficult for low rank Hunters to touch.

If you didn't have related skills, you had to separately prepare equipment or items, so there were cases where people could suffer a loss at any moment instead. Thanks to that, it wasn't hard to bid on this time's D-Rank dungeon, too.

"The view's nice."

A bright blue sky was reflected on the clear surface like a mirror. Every time the wind blew, the grass gently danced around and ripples trembled rhythmically.

Even before the regression when I was busy looking after my own life, I sometimes felt that the dungeon's scenery was intriguing. Now when I was overflowing with leisure, I took it a step further and had doubts.

Making something like this, and even resetting it each time, as expected, wouldn't you have to be about god level to do something like this?

‘Though the system people seemed far from omnipotence.’

Speaking of, today was quiet. Were they busy? Them chattering about nonsense was annoying, but since there wasn’t even a greeting, I was little sad.

‘We would probably be able to speak a bit more properly in a few days.’

Let’s just quickly clear the dungeon and leave. This was the third unauthorized outing. If I got caught[1], it wouldn’t be strange. I shouldn’t drag it out, and quickly finish and return.

I walked up close to the lake. I was using Wall Lizard, so there still wasn’t any change to the lake.

‘The usual monster was fish[2] type, right?’

It was a monster that looked similar to an eel and that could act even outside of water to a certain extent.

The items I was going to use today were the Mana increase earrings and mana potions. It was these two. I had no intention of directly going inside the water.

I sat with my knees touching the lakeside, and lowered my hand into the water.

Sticky poison.

The already strong C-Rank poison had double the effect and then doubled again with Veteran. That terrifying poison slowly spread through the water. The flawlessly clear water started to show a faint gray.

“Somehow my conscience is pricked a little.”

It was inside a dungeon, and the opponents were monsters, and it would reliably reset once the attack ends.

But still, I felt like I was doing something I shouldn't do. It is illegal to fish using poisonous substances. It is also unallowed to use electric shocks. Nature love, environment protection.

-Kooukkoouk

It wasn't long before noises similar to a toad's cry as well as a 3-meter-ish eel burst out of the water.

Splash!

Jump!

The eels jumping out of the water in a row couldn't even open and close their mouths several times before they died in a row. Near where the poison started, the corpses of eels who couldn't even struggle and died instantly, floated up.

The effect was really good. It was so good, I felt like I had become an illegal sewer pipe spewing out toxic waste water.

'If it's this much, then this should be good, right?'

I took my hand out of the water and waited a bit. Big and small eels ceaselessly burst out and floated up. It wasn't that big of a lake, but there were quite a lot.

-Kewwouh!

When about more the half the eels died, a blue eel raised its head from the small island in the middle of the lake.

[6th Rank Water Dragon Type – Blue Eel

Current stat rank C

Growth possible stat rank C

Optimized Initial Skills

Water Cannon(C) Acquired

Wave Making Tail(C) Acquired]

It was a dragon type. Though the species was eel. If it was a 6th rank water dragon type with stat C, it was on the higher side among C-Rank monsters. Still, if it was dragon type, rather than the mana stones, the corpse was more expensive. To lure it towards shore, I released Wall Lizard.

-Keureureu

The Blue Eel discovered me. It was raising its head upright when it moved its fins that had long claws and slipped into the water.

“That’s right, come.”

I should give the magic stone to Peace and the skin and bones to Myeongwoo. They were too cheap of materials for an SS-Rank skill, but they should be okay for practice.

-Keureuk

The speed of the vigorously swimming Blue Eel gradually became slower.

-Keureu...

Even the color of the scales turned gray. Ah, oh no. The complexion also wasn't good at all. In the end, it couldn't even reach the shore I was on, and.

-Kieek

Burble

...I'll pray for your soul.

Along with the sound of the Blue Eel dying, it sank into the water. The poison was strong, but I thought it had been neutralized a lot so it would be okay. I thought about using the tentacles to fish it out, but I just left it. It would be a bit much to use something poisoned.

Then, an escape gate appeared at the lakeside.

Now, what kind of title would come out this time?

.....Um. The message window wasn't popping up.

“.....Excuse me, people who made the system?”

Was it a lag? I was thinking that it was pretty quiet – did a communication error occur?

[Impressive achievement! With stat F, attack skills less than F, using less than five items, you have successfully attacked an D-Rank dungeon by yourself!]

Oh, finally the achievement window... did pop up, but.

‘It’s no news for a long time again.’

When I waited for a while, a message window appeared again.

[Please choose.

Being Durable(S)

Can’t Be Found(S)

Swift Footed(S)]

Why suddenly choices? I had never heard of being able to choose an achievement award title. Could it be it was slow because this was being prepared?

‘I’m thankful that you gave me choices, but it would be even better if you let me see the explanation windows.’

Still, I could more or less guess, looking at just the title names. They were respectively defense, hiding, agility or instant movement related titles. Were they named simply like that so it would be easy to understand?

‘All three of them are titles that seem like they would be good for my protection.’

I had wanted a double buff for special skills. And for a D-Rank dungeon attack by myself, wasn't it a bit stingy? This time was also S-Rank. I had thought that it would be around SS-Rank level; it was a disappointment.

Anyways, I had to choose one among the three – which should I pick?

‘An S-Rank defense skill would be good too. But if it was a stat increase, then it would be a loss.’

Of course, it would probably raise it a lot, as an S-Rank title, but with my basic stats as F-Rank, it wasn't to the point of being meaningful. My earrings' shield skill would probably be more useful instead.

‘Still, since they're purposely picked by the system people, unless they're thinking of putting me in a predicament, I think they're skill titles.’

If it was an S-Rank defense skill, it would be perfect for a short term fight. But if it went long term, then I would probably just become a hunched turtle. It wasn't like I had a means of attack or anything, and if I was indoors, even if just my room door was locked, I wouldn't be able to move an inch.

‘Anyways, except for monsters, there wouldn't be guys trying to kill me, so hiding or agility would probably be better.’

Swift Footed wouldn't be teleportation, looking at the name, and it would be a type that gave instant movement or increased movement speed. Hiding was definitely better than that. Just looking at Wall

Lizard, just how usefully and well was I using it?

If it was a hiding skill attached to an S-Rank title, it would be A-Rank at minimum. Still, just in case, should I ask?

“The Can’t Be Found title, is it correct that it comes with an A-Rank or higher hiding skill?”

[‘~’;;;]

Ah, yes. They couldn’t tell me.

“If Swift-Footed is a teleportation skill, please send an emoticon.”

It was quiet. As expected, it wasn’t teleportation. Then I should get hiding.

Of the three titles, I chose Can’t Be Found.

[Can’t Be Found(S)

The F-Rank Hunter that overcame a D-Rank dungeon alone is an expert in hiding?

Hidden Puzzle[3](A)

One More as a Freebie(S)]

It was a title explanation that seemed like they had tried to make it fit the achievement. The other two explanations would probably be similar to this. Hidden Puzzle should be the hiding skill, and what was

One More as a Freebie? The name seemed like it was added as a freebie but the rank was S.

‘The other two probably would have been this combination too.’

One more as a freebie as a defense or agility related skill. It was probably something like this.

[Hidden Puzzle(A)

Become a state where it is hard for you to be perceived even if focused on or looked for]

Hidden Puzzle seemed like it wasn’t that my appearance itself disappeared, but that it was hard to be recognized, as a skill similar to Wall Lizard. And One More as a Freebie was.

[One More as a Freebie(S)

Sharing one S-Rank or lower title or skill with 1 opponent while in contact

Standby time for reapplication per each skill 15 days

✕Relevant skills exempted]

...Wow, wait. Was this the main thing? It was possible to share skills and titles? Which were the S-Rank and lower ones again?

“They paid attention to me complaining that they were baubles.”

I was a little moved.

Let's see, first of all, the recently acquired S-Rank titles were Miracle and Veteran. Item doubled and attack skill effect doubled. Oh shit.

If it was going to be like this, I should've just chosen the defense skill.

'It has to be while in contact, so I would probably be able to follow along to a mid rank dungeon at most.'

Since I could use a B-Rank shield skill through the earrings. Hiding was useless in a melee. If it was an A-Rank or higher defense skill, I would be able to follow along to a high rank dungeon too! It was regrettable.

Still, if an S-Rank dungeon burst or something, it could be handled quickly. When the dungeon level of difficulty would start to go up quickly, it wouldn't be far before I would probably have no choice but to make good use of it.

Besides that, Hidden Puzzle, and two pretty useless assistance skills. And the Seed-Leaf skill.

'The one the system people were aiming for was probably this Seed-Leaf skill. Since it seemed like they wanted me to raise Hunters.'

Standby time for optimized Awakening use: 30 days. Somehow, I might be able to use it three times per month. Since the Freebie skill standby time was 15 days.

But the problem was that the keyword applied targets were limited; the My Brat skill was L-Rank so it was impossible to share. In the end, it was either I wouldn't be able to use it, or it would be relevant to people I applied the keyword to. Seeing how the system people purposely stuck in the Freebie skill, it was likely to be the latter.

Then, the remaining problem was the people to share the skills with.

‘I have to keep on hiding the optimized Awakening, so I need people I can trust.’

If this was discovered, it would get really bothersome.

For familiars, there was a demand limited to giant guilds or high rank Hunters. But for optimized Awakening, it was obvious that the Unawakened People in the entire world would crowd around asking me to use it on them.

Truthfully, wouldn’t I be an unscratched lottery ticket?

After Awakened People appeared, anyone would’ve had that kind of thought at least once. But there was a person who could increase the probability of winning and who would scratch the lottery ticket for you? Of course you would want to find them and hand over your lottery ticket.

On top of that, there was even a restriction on the number of times, so it would become a pandemonium that made my head hurt just imagining.

‘If I exclude the high rank Hunters who have to go into dungeon attack every few days, the only immediate one is Myeongwoo.’

There weren’t people I needed to optimally Awaken right away, so I should wait a bit and see.

When I returned home, a parcel had arrived in the meantime. It was a newly bought cell phone.

The one I was using was thrown around when I was kidnapped, so a corner had broken, and above all, the camera performance wasn’t good.

“Now, Peace. Look here. No, don’t come over.”

-Geureureung

If you clung to my leg, I wouldn’t be able to take a photo.

“Chirpie, did you go into the kitchen again?”

-Chirp chirp!

Because I fed it magic stones in the kitchen, it would crawl there at the drop of a hat and chirp.

“Chirpie, come here.”

-Chirp!

“There’s magic stone powder here.”

When I set the bottle with C-Rank magic stone powder on the table, immediately.

Tap tap tap tap

I heard the sound of small footsteps running over. The baby bird that had reached the bottom of the table started to flap and hop.

-Chirp chirp chirp!

Did you like eating that much? I took a photo of Chirpie trying as hard as it could to go up the table. Should I take a video?

-Chirp!

Chirpie, who was jumping for a long time, suddenly stopped. Then it snapped around to the side. That guy's eyes landed on Peace, who was sitting at my feet.

-Cheep cheep cheep

Whatever it was thinking, Chirpie went toward Peace. And then.

"Oho."

It started to crawl on top of Peace's body. Peace looked up at me as if taken aback.

-Kkioong

"Bear with it for a bit."

That Chirpie wasn't a complete idiot. It was praiseworthy.

-Chirp!

Finally reaching and standing on top of Peace's head, Chirpie flapped its small wings and shouted a roar

of victory(?). Peace sent a gaze asking me to do something about this irritating tiny thing.

“Just a minute, just a minute.”

Cute. I definitely had to take a photo of this.

-Cheeep, cheeep

After getting on Peace’s head, Chirpie turned its direction toward the table. It spread its two wings wide with what it thought of as solemnity. The distance was a bit much – would it be okay?

-Chiiirp!

With a burst, it jumped! Then,

Bump bump

It landed precariously on the edge of the table and bounced about two times, and then rolled and stopped. Oh, it succeeded.

-Chirp!

“Our Chirpie, you’ve become a little smarter in the meantime.”

It felt like just yesterday when it couldn’t differentiate between the TV and the real thing. Though it really was yesterday. I took a picture of it clinging to the magic stone bottle and cheeping, and broke F-Rank magic stones and gave them to it.

-Cheep!!

Huh, it didn't eat immediately and complained. This guy's food demands were gradually getting more severe.

"You're not going to eat? I'll take it away?"

-Cheep!!

When I stretched my hand toward the magic stones, it quickly ate all of them up and hugged the magic stone bottle again.

"Peace, look at your little sibling. Like that, it'll try to swallow it by the bottle."

-Kkiang

Peace tapped my leg with his front feet as if saying 'it's not my business so pick me up instead'. That was your food, punk.

I left Chirpie to film a romance with the magic stone bottle, and picked up Peace and sat on the sofa. I had already downloaded the social media app.

'It has really been a long time.'

I hadn't ever done it properly either. I made one following the trend, but I didn't really have anything to post about so I quit soon. I put the profile photo as the photo of Peace and Chirpie that I had just taken a moment ago. How cute. Then, I put up the photos that I took a long time ago of Peace when he was young, the photo of Chirpie rolling on the table, and the one of Chirpie holding the bottle.

Did I have to put things like tags on them?

'Hmm, let's just be laid back about it.'

First, I followed Haeyeon Guild, and then Seseong, Breaker, and Hanshin. I should follow MKC for now, too. And the Hunter Association and the market had separate accounts.

While I was looking for those, like that.

2,155 followers

The followers that were 0 had increased in an instant. How was it so fast? The guild accounts had also followed me back in that time. The comments were also continuing to increase.

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-Peace!!! It's noona!!!! ππππππππππππππ[4]
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-Ah hella cyute What is that cotton ball

-no way this really han yoojins account? theres another monster???[5]

-thought it was sticky rice cake want to put it in my mouth!!!!!!!

-crayz[6]..... look at when Peace was a baby..... take me♡

Mmhm, my kids were quite cute. In order to not receive suspicion for following Riette's account, I should follow about a hundred more people. It was a bit much to just follow Hunters, so should I find a few famous celebrities? Who was popular these days?

I checked the messages I had gotten as I searched through my memory. More than half were questions asking if it really was me. Among them, one that seemed excited stood out to my eyes.

-Hello!! This is Bak Hayool, who met you last time at the broadcasting station! I apologize for suddenly sending a message like this, but I am truly very pleased to see you! Is Chirpie a new monster you have acquired? It is really so cuteㅍㅍㅍㅍㅍㅍ

Broadcasting station? Bak Hayool? Who was that? As soon as I went to Bak Hayool's account, I remembered right away.

It was the guy who had optimized skills based on his face.

[1] lit. 'tail gets stepped on' from 'if tail is long it gets stepped on' which means 'even if you do bad things without others knowing, eventually, you'll get caught'

[2] like the 'abnormal bird' from several chapters ago, this word also means 'abnormal fish'. Once again, as there is no eng equivalent for mythical fishes, I'm leaving the tl as 'fish'

[3] lit. 'finding hidden image' but it's basically a pictorial puzzle where you look for hidden

objects in a cramped picture. Was super tempted to tl it as 'where's waldo'

[4] i'm sure it's obvious & I think it's come up in prev ch but π is a krn letter and it's used like this to imply tears the way TT is in eng

[5] these 2 sentences were written w no spaces, which is common in krn bc spaces aren't as important as they are in eng, so to give a corresponding eng internet writing feel to that, I put it all in lowercase

[6] used a purposeful misspelling of 'crazy' but like in a way that if u said it outloud it would probably sound like 'cwazy'

Chapter 59: < Pretended to Forget (2) >

< Pretended to Forget (2) >

'The skills were triple A, right?'

It was a waste to leave him alone, but I hadn't thought about using the optimized Awakening skill that I could only use once each month. And I didn't want to apply the keyword either. But now that it was possible to optimally Awaken people three times per month...

'It's not like A-Rank special skills are common either.'

Should I foster a sense of closeness for now?

-Hello. Yes, it is a new kid I have acquired^^

As soon as I sent the message, a reply came back.

-Ahh you repliedㅠㅠㅠㅠ Thank you! Iii was really impressed by the broadcast! Peace is so cute and Chirpie is reallycompletely love!!!

-Ah, yes. Thank you.

-Ireally my dream is to awaken and enter haeyeon guild! I want to go and be peace's feet washing cloth!!!

I was going to leave Haeyeon soon though. Before that, why feet washing cloth?

'How should I reply?'

I couldn't be like 'be his feet washing cloth you say, yes, please do so'.

-It is not easy to Awaken^^

Not yet, that is. When the Awakening Centers form soon, even dogs or cows[1] could Awaken and put themselves forward saying they would become Hunters, and because of that, there was a commotion again. Anyways, it was a mess.

-That is trueπππππ I tried all sorts of things but they would not work πππ So I asked an Awakening broker!!

What?

-ah i cant talk about itπππ It is a secret:)

Cutting off your nose to spite your face[2], this idiot.

‘So he got into an accident in a dungeon.’

No wonder I didn’t have any memory of seeing his face. Getting an injury serious enough that he couldn’t be active, or possibly dying. It probably was one of those two.

Ah this, what do I do with this guy.

-Awakening brokers, those are scams.

-Scams?

-Yes. So please do not meet with a broker.

The chat that was like in real time momentarily didn't give a reply.

-I already came here though...

Damn. Which brokers were they? Most of them were guys who would nicely let you go if you said you wouldn't take back the money, but a minority were evil people who pulled people over to kill them from the start. If they bought exclusive entrance passes and then after entering the dungeon, swipe, neither the corpse or evidence would remain.

Of course, if they did that several times, they probably would get caught, but it wasn't treated as murder to drag ordinary people to dungeons yet. It was just an unfortunate accident.

Even if they were caught, at the most, it would be done with their Hunter licenses being suspended. Brokers were usually low rank Hunters, so it wasn't considered a huge blow.

-Where are you? Who are the brokers?

-At a D-Rank dungeon near the Yeouido Wonhyo Bridge. I don't know their names, but there are C-Rank Hunters and D-Rank Hunters. The leader is apparently a C-Rank Hunter

Shoot. If it was a team including C-Ranks, they would shut his mouth as thoroughly as how very much they had to lose if they were caught doing broker work. He wouldn't come back out at all.

-Should I just say I won't do it?

-No, please wait. When will you go inside?

-Not all the people have come yet. Just a while ago there was contact that the team leader would be about 30 minutes late.

30 minutes. If it was Wonhyo Bridge, it was close to here. Should I contact Haeyeon Guild and send people? Or.

'Should I just go and get him out?'

Without making a big deal out of it, I could just use Thorn Trap slightly, hide by sharing the Hidden Puzzle skill, and just come out.

-Are you inside a building?

-I am inside a van outside.

As expected, the leader must have gotten a successful bid. You needed a password as well as a Hunter license chip, so they couldn't go inside yet.

-i was managing my fans but they said to turn off my phone now π π π π π

-Please listen to them well, and stay there quietly.

It wasn't difficult and while I was at it, let's add some debt. He would probably come over easily if I confessed something like 'for safety, I can't go out secretly but I was so worried, I came here directly' and such. He wanted to be a Hunter that bad, so I should bring him over and use him as the face[3] of my group.

It was a time when people entering was at its height so going out was quick. When I got near the Wonhyo Bridge D-Rank dungeon building, even with a glance, I could see a suspicious looking van parked by the roadside. The car was black and the windows were black.

‘Did that leader guy not come yet?’

The dungeon building was inside an alley. I could use Thorn Trap while passing between that alley and pull Bak Hayool out.

‘No, rather than that, should I save him right before he goes into the dungeon?’

While I was at it, it would be better to make a little more dramatic situation. Right after he went in would be okay too. A dungeon gate was open for one hour, and inside the dungeon, I could use the attack skills as much as I wanted. The earrings’ shielding skill could be applied to others too. So Bak Hayool wouldn’t get hurt.

The most effective time would be right after those guys showed their evil intentions. Since Bak Hayool should also be unsure whether my words were right or wrong.

Let’s decide after seeing the situation.

‘I also have to try out the Hidden skill to see how far it goes.’

Should I use it with Yoohyun as the opponent? I should tell him about the Can’t Be Found title. How should I say I earned it? Because that little brother tried so much to hide me? There would be no other stat F-Ranks that got this much protection from S, A-Ranks, other than saints.

-Screech

Just then, one car quickly came in and stopped at the roadside. So they finally came.

I pushed off from where I was leaning my back against the wall and stood up. The car door opened and a large man stepped out.

Seeing that face, I unconsciously laughed without a sound.

‘...Wow, this is really.’

Things just happened so that I would even meet a guy I had killed. It was really thrilling. If it were up to me, I would’ve gone up to greet him or something. While smiling brightly.

Hi, we met 4 years ago, possibly 1 year later. You about halfway killed me, and I stabbed your neck. It’s quite a fun recollection. Don’t you think so?

All the faces coming out of the van were familiar. The guy I killed second, the guy I killed third, fourth, fifth, sixth. They would have killed Bak Hayool-ssi before then.

‘Rather than I couldn’t think of it, it was that I didn’t think of it.’

Of course they were alive. The dead people. The killed people.

An F-Rank Hunter's initial probability of survival was low. So for the first year where you didn't have experience and proper equipment, half ran away and half of the remaining half died or were wounded irreversibly.

Simply speaking, of the people who resolutely stepped into dungeons, half were carried out. On top of that, I had become an Hunter when the Awakening Centers had just formed so it was a situation of utter chaos where the number of newbies had piled up and there were even a lot of problems socially.

'It was enough to make that Yoohyun shiver.'

If it was then, it would have been hard for that guy to look after me. The public opinion wasn't good in various ways, and there were too many scrutinizing eyes for him to secretly look after me.

If I thought about it now, I wondered if there wasn't something like a kind of operation that went on targeted on me. The response was too excessive to simply be the work of a couple of trash journalists. It was a matter that could be packaged up excitingly, and I was an F-Rank so I was easy to use, and at that time, in the point of view of the public opinion, you could also drag Haeyeon Guild down.

Whether it was the government or the Association or rival guilds, not using me was being stupid.

Anyways it was that kind of chaotic situation, but I didn't die. Even without a proper team, I got through the 1st year and passed 2 years somehow stably settled into my position.

Last Repayment. The skill where I received all the skills and abilities of the target with twice the effect for one hour upon the death of a keyword-applied target.

The keyword of the 'Caregiver' title was quite easy to apply. It was done with amiably buying and passing around something like coffee, having some idle chats, and smiling while saying 'do your best'[4] several times. By being diligent, around the time I had to go into a dungeon, it was possible for around two people to have the keyword applied.

"Let's quickly go in. While our client covers his face well."

Bak Hayool followed the instructions and pulled his hood far down over his head. He was also wearing sunglasses.

...I swear I didn't apply the keyword aiming for the Last Repayment skill. Besides when I was killing those guys. It was a tiny 10% growth buff, but I had applied it since it was better than nothing. Since, among them, there were people I wanted to continue working with.

And most of them died. I survived.

A spearman with buff skills. It was a position of dying late. Around the time I was in danger, Last Repayment was applied, and thanks to that, I survived.

So, that was why, well... It was like that, but now they were things that didn't exist.....

Me killing those guys, those guys torturing me, also became things that didn't exist.

I quietly walked, following those guys. They were C~D-Rank. Even if I stuck close right next to them, they wouldn't notice me. Not when we went inside the building, and not even when we were standing in front of the dungeon gate.

"Are the preparations ready?"

"Put on the equipment properly."

Maybe because it was a high grade dungeon even among D-Rank dungeons, the preparation was thorough. The size of a high grade D-Rank dungeon was smaller than a low grade C-Rank, but the income came out as much as 50%, so compared to the amount of labor, the efficiency was good. The amount of time going around was a quarter, and it was safe. It was considered that if you were aiming for jackpot in one blow, it was a C-Rank, but a stable average, it was D-Rank.

“So this is a dungeon!”

As soon as I passed through the gate, Bak Hayool shouted with an excited voice. Geez, this guy.

Puk!

“Ugh!”

One Hunter kicked Bak Hayool’s shin. Then they warned him in a low voice.

“You think just because you’re a celebrity, you can go around advertising to monsters? Don’t pull aggro and shut up.”

“.....Yes.”

Bak Hayool really didn’t have a sense of crisis. Though Unawakened People were usually like that. Not having been Awakened was similar to being a peaceful modern person who hadn’t properly suffered through even a dungeon break. Whether it was a dungeon or a monster, it was obvious that it would be hard to feel a sense of reality.

That was why right after the Awakening Centers appeared, quite a lot of newbie Hunters died. One part was probably also because the amount of Awakened People had increased so much that novice training quality had fallen.

“We’re going in in a 3 o’clock direction. Mark it on the entrance.”

The team’s leader said. This dungeon was a rock environment where the valley was divided into various sections. It wasn’t as difficult as a labyrinth, but if you wanted to decrease the amount of fruitless attempts, it was better to mark along as you went.

I stuck close behind the dispirited Bak Hayool and slowly followed them.

-Shiik!

Pajik!

A monster that seemed like a mix of a snake and a caterpillar burst out of the rock wall.

Tung!

The monsters lunging as if pouring out were bounced off shields, and,

Kwajik!

The spearman behind the shield accurately pierced the monster's head with the end of their spear. Blood splattered into the air and the long body that was wiggling like a reeled fish soon sagged. Then another one again, a second one. A hunt close to repetitive work continued.

The C-Rank leader at the very front, shields and spears on both sides, the C-Rank defense type Hunter at the very back, and finally the one acting as assistance and porter.

It was a team with a total of seven and a good[5] balance.

'From now on, they're probably going to continue to hunt for an hour.'

They probably wouldn't show their true colors until the gate was deactivated.

C-Rank Hunter team, Gosan[6]. They were an established central team with 2 and half years of work experience when I had met them, and now with 1 and half years. With two C-Ranks, it was enough combat power to even make a guild, but they stayed as a D-Rank dungeon specialty attack team, and in their own way, their name was known.

Their image was okay too. Since nobody knew what those guys did as a side job.

“Magic stones are coming out pretty well today.”

The assistance plus porter moved the item with a magic stone detection function here and there. Every time the snake caterpillars’ bellies were cut open, Bak Hayool’s eyes also moved here and there. Still, even for an Unawakened Person, he was enduring it pretty well.

The Gosan Team aimed at Unawakened People and low rank Hunters they thought would make some money through their side job. They showed off a good image, and chose and reeled in, not just anybody and everybody, but prey with comfortable bank balances or who could be used well.

Even just talking about Bak Hayool, he was a celebrity who only needed to get famous. Glancing over his social media, it hadn’t been long since he debuted, he had already paid for fame with his face, and his movie role was one with high importance. It meant that if you only grasped him well, he was prey who would sufficiently provide money.

Thought it seemed like they had killed him as a mistake or because there was a problem, but originally, they should’ve planned to keep him alive and use him well.

After brainwashing him with that C-Rank leader’s skill.

[Awakened Person – Kim Yongjin

Current stat rank C

Possible Awakening stat rank C

Optimized Initial Skills

Chopping Down(C) Acquired

Puppet's Strings(D) Acquired

Kicking(D) Acquisition failure]

Puppet's Strings. D-Rank special skill. Exactly what was he doing before Awakening that a brainwashing skill was an optimized initial skill?

Mind-related skills mostly had low effects compared to the ranks. If it was about D-Rank, it didn't work well on even F-Ranks. That is, if the F-Rank's state was normal.

So those guys lured F-Ranks and Unawakened People into dungeons and put them into states where they couldn't be normal. Once the Puppet skill was applied, they didn't have to worry about anything and just be relaxed.

It wasn't that the Gosan Team pointlessly didn't make a guild and only attacked safe D-Rank and lower dungeons. They could comfortably trick out money, so why would they risk their lives and unnecessarily suffer? They just needed to do attacks enough to maintain their image.

The long continuing valley ended and a wide open space appeared. It wasn't that it ended, but that it should have been around the middle point. The time was also around passing one hour.

"Alright, let's rest here and then go."

The leader, Kim Yongjin, said. As soon as his words fell the defense Hunter and the shields inspected the surroundings. They really were a good team. They meshed well.

"You said you were Bak Hayool, right?"

Kim Yongjin took off his studded gloves as he went toward Bak Hayool, who was hovering awkwardly. Bak Hayool nodded his head.

"...Yes."

"You really are pretty good looking. How could a person look this way? Once the movie

releases, a ton of things like commercials would probably come in.”

“I do not know yet if it will be successful. And I am going to be a Hun-.”

“Anyways a bastard with everything wants more[7]!”

Bam!

Kim Yongjin’s fist slammed into Bak Hayool’s face. By his estimation, it was a lightly thrown fist without much power behind it, but the thin[8] body couldn’t handle it and swayed like a reed.

“If you were born with that kind of face, you should be thankful and work hard selling it!”

“Ah, hyung-nim. You shouldn’t touch the face.”

“Don’t worry. If it’s that much, there won’t be a trace if you apply a potion.”

Amidst the snickering, Bak Hayool was frozen with a stupid expression. Blood was spilling from one side of his nose. Even with a nosebleed and that expression, he was still good looking.

“E-e-excuse me.....”

“How long do you think will this bastard hold out?”

“A million won on 30 minutes.”

“I heard celebrities are actually pretty tough; I’m one hour. I’m putting in five million.”

For me, I was an Awakened Person and had a little bit of work experience, so the guy who put in the least called five hours. I was remembering the memories I had forgotten.

“Please wait, that’s.....”

Bak Hayool furtively stepped backwards. Those guys were laughing as they watched him. The gate had already closed. Even if it was open, it was close to impossible for an Unawakened Person to reach the gate alone safely. And those guys waiting for the gate to close, would have been in case someone came to save him, not because they were worrying that Bak Hayool would get away. Since he was a famous person in his own way.

“Should we start by breaking one of his legs?”

“There can’t be a hindrance to the actor-nim’s activity. Carefully, do it carefully. To a point we can fix with potions.”

The atmosphere was so gentle; how did they even go so far as to think of him not being able to move?

“S-spare...ugh!”

A D-Rank Hunter kicked Bak Hayool’s stomach. The guy staggering and falling backwards,

Tuk

I grabbed him.

“W-What?!”

The Hunter who kicked Bak Hayool hurriedly stepped back. The other Hunters simultaneously got ready for combat.

“What do you mean what?”

I didn’t come wearing my hat, and I took off my sunglasses and released Wall Lizard as I smiled. Bak Hayool’s eyes became round.

“Oh, oh-!”

“Please wait here nicely. For good measure, while closing your eyes.”

It was going to be a bit of a stimulating scene for Unawakened People to watch.

[1] a commonly used phrase to mean ‘anybody/everybody’, but it’s easy to understand as is, so I left the lit. tl

[2] lit. ‘lying down and spitting’

[3] lit. ‘face madame’ where ‘madame’ is the french word transliterated into krn. He doesn’t say ‘of my group’ but in eng you have to say ‘face of sth’ in order to have that meaning, and a ‘face madame’ is (besides the female owner of an alcohol house, etc.) ‘sb who is typical and characteristic of a group or field enough to represent it’, according to the krn dict. The krn-eng dict gives ‘madame’ (the usage in krn) as ‘figurehead’ but that didn’t seem completely in line w the krn dict so I went w the krn def.

[4] lit. ‘have/give strength’ which is slightly different from ‘do your best’ but they’re both standard cheering phrases in their respective languages

[5] the word is closer to ‘okay’ or ‘fine’ than ‘good’, but usually in eng if you use ‘okay’ as an adj in front of a noun like this, it has the negative connotation of ‘just okay’ or ‘mediocre’ so I changed it to ‘good’. Same for a bit down the ch.

[6] normally means 'high mountain', or if as a modifier noun/adj 'alpine', but it seems like a name and so it might mean sth else. If it's relevant, the hanja would be in parenthesis after it (as with Haeyeon), which it isn't here, so it's not that important I guess.

[7] it's more like 'bastard who has [it] does more' but that kind of sounds weird in eng, so while the tl isn't quiet right, I think it gets the gist across

[8] author uses a word that isn't in the dict, but I'm p sure it's supposed to mean sth like this, like maybe it's **마른 듯한** (seem skinny) shortened into **마רות** (the word used)

Chapter 60: <Pretended to Forget (3) >

< Pretended to Forget (3) >

"Hunter Han Yoojin-nim!"

Bak Hayool shouted with a voice filled with welcome and worry. At the same time, surprise seeped into the expression of those guys on guard.

"I was wondering, but it's really Han Yoojin?"

“Why is Han Yoojin here? I thought he was hidden away somewhere you couldn’t even see his face by the Haeyeon Guild Leader!”

“Fuck, is Han Yoohyun coming here too?”

Those guys were taken aback and scanned the surroundings. Then again, they couldn’t have thought that I came by myself. But I was alone.

“Did the Haeyeon Guild Leader really come here too?”

Bak Hayool was excited, with his face smeared with his nosebleed. Did this guy still like Hunters after being hit? That was an illness.

“I am alone.”

“Sorry? But-!”

“Please just close your eyes.”

I stood to the side and used the earrings’ shield skill on Bak Hayool. Bak Hayool yelled something, but I used it to the maximum so even sound was blocked and I couldn’t hear him. It was B-Rank shielding so unless I made a mistake, not a single hair on him would get hurt. I shouldn’t use the poison, as much as possible.

“...He’s alone?”

Kim Yongjin mumbled, as if he couldn’t believe it. He sure had a lot of suspicion.

“If I wasn’t alone, someone probably would have burst out already. You all probably know, but I’m in a position of getting quite an excessive amount of protection, right?”

There wasn’t just one or two people who would be shocked seeing me do this kind of thing here. At my words, those guys were relieved.

“Did that stat F-Rank lose his mind?”

When a D-Rank tried to go over to me, Kim Yongjin stretched out his arm and blocked them.

“Wait. There has to be something for him to be that confident. Just from the fact that he followed us here without being caught means it’s not normal.”

“Still, aren’t his stats definitely F-Rank? He got certified by the Association.”

“Even if he had a lot of equipment, he wouldn’t be at a level of a C-Rank. He’s a piece of

rice cake[1] that rolled over.”

The rice cake was our Chirpie. It really rolled around well, all round and soft.

“First of all, should I say I’m happy to see you? We have a relationship where it’s our first meeting, but it’s not our first meeting.”

At my words, those guys had expressions like asking what nonsense I was saying.

“...Though I did see him on TV.”

“No, we really met for real. Actually, I regressed. I came back to the past. You’re surprised, right?”

Saying this in front of guys I had killed with my own hands 4 years ago, it really was pleasant. And it was super realistic. Yoohyun came alive so right away, that it was little ambiguous.

“It was as much as 5 years! Ah, I met you guys 4 years ago. It’s 1 year from now, and after that I never saw you guys again. Since I killed you. Since I could meet you again, I’m really pleased. You’re going to die anyways, so become my bamboo forest[2].”

Let’s just let it out refreshingly.

“.....What, is he crazy?”

“I also know that I look crazy, but if you say it openly, I’ll be hurt. And you guys don’t have your heads screwed on right, either. If I’m fifty steps, you bastards would be five hundred steps. Especially Kim Yongjin, you seriously crazy bastard. I was really regretful because I killed you too comfortably that time.”

That I would get one more chance like this, thank you. If I really thought like that, then I really would seem like a crazy guy. I didn’t actually like killing people. But, while living, you couldn’t help but lose control at least once, and even though the matter with me disappeared, there was no change in that those guys ruined and would ruin a lot of people’s futures.

“Still, thanks to you guys, I came to my senses.”

After the 2nd year, I properly established myself. I couldn’t make a fixed team, but around that time, I was able to regularly save Hunters with okay abilities... wait. Thinking of, that time was exactly when MKC went under and Haeyeon had entered that empty seat.

Unlike when Awakening Centers appeared and things were chaotic, it was when there was breathing room. And I started to hear less hateful things from Haeyeon. Until the dungeon level of difficulty started to become unruly. ...Was it that my little brother had placed people around me?

And the time when Yoohyun had personally run into the dungeon that changed rank, was around when Haeyeon had been established as 1st in the country and the guild leader had free time in his own way.

“Hm, people really can’t be too free.”

If he was busy fighting with other guilds, he wouldn’t have had the leisure to do something crazy like running in before the gate closed. Instead, he would have sent one or two A-Rank Hunters at most.

“That guy really doesn’t seem like he’s in his right mind?”

Along with the gazes looking at the crazy guy, I heard whispers. I felt wronged. My mind was clear, in general.

“Even though I don’t know lottery ticket numbers, it’s true that I returned to the past. What should I tell you? Is there anything you’re curious about? Should I tell you the S-Rank Hunters that will appear from now on? What about amazing-rank new dungeons? You have a lot of interest in stocks, right? Lee Dongwan, the stocks you just bought are going to become a scrap of tissue within a month.”

This pathetic bastard that still muttered on and on about it one year later.

Anyways.

“It’s good that we met again like this. You guys haven’t regressed so you wouldn’t know my feelings, but, it actually felt dirty that all the things I suffered through disappeared. So I tried not to think about it. At any rate, the situation changed a lot, and I decided to be well-behaved at first. Above anything else, I didn’t... I tried not to think about the fact that the people who I was involved with and who had died, were alive and walking around.”

It wasn’t just that people I was close to died, either. Thanks to that, I lived. At the same time, I even received their memories. In front of my eyes, the corpse was there, but the memories of that person thinking of me rose up in my mind. For Yoohyun, it was a portion of his whole life’s memories, so it came in sparsely, but usually, the memories right before dying came in without fail. If it was just someone I knew to a certain extent, it was still okay.

But, if that was them worrying about me, it was really circumstances that would drive you crazy.

If they were an uselessly good person, so there were only good memories. The auditory hallucinations of my name being called, didn’t leave my ears for days and days. If I kept on remembering, it felt like I would die, so I purposely tried to forget.

But now they were all alive. How should I explain that feeling?

Unlike with Yoohyun, I had buried it inside for several years. Unlike with Yoohyun, now they didn’t even know me.

Like those guys in front of my eyes.

Should I be happy, or sad, or say that I'm sorry, or that I'm thankful? Before that, was it okay to contact them and meet them? It was thanks to you dying that I lived.

I couldn't consult somebody about something like this, and I just went on pretending I had forgotten.

"What do you guys think? Some of them were really good people. To the point that I fell into alcohol with a heart that felt it would go halfway crazed."

Maybe they didn't want to listen to my words anymore, because those guys went into a combat formation. You should reply at least. Grumbling, I took out the curved knife that I got as a reward from the D-Rank dungeon.

"Drive him into the middle and catch him alive!"

Along with Kim Yongjin's shout, the two Hunters who had shields in front of them moved toward my front. The C-Rank defense Hunter used a skill and quickly moved around to my back. I stretched out a hand and grabbed that guy's collar and picked him up and hurled him as if throwing him over my shoulder.

Bam!

Then I stabbed the curved knife into the forehead of the shield Hunter on the left and stole the shield and threw it at the guy on the right.

Crack!

“Urgh!”

The hit shield broke, and the Hunter who was holding the shield couldn’t endure the strength and tumbled back.

“What is this!”

While the D-Rank Hunters were taken aback, Kim Yongjin tried to run away right away. The decision sure was fast.

Thorn Trap.

“Argh!”

Kim Yongjin fell forward, like a frog hit by a rock. I took out the curved knife and cut the leg

of the defense Hunter struggling to stand up, and used Thorn Trap on the remaining Hunters.

“As expected, contacting them would be good? Hm? Yongjin.”

I asked, going toward the trembling Kim Yongjin.

“I remember their phone numbers, but what should I say? Since they don’t know me. But, I can’t continue like this, pretending I don’t know them. Since those people would be alive like you guys. Right now, it’s probably before they Awaken, but when the Awakening Centers form, they’ll become Hunters, and they’ll go into dungeons like you guys. In the middle of that chaotic situation.”

I nicely cut one of Kim Yongjin’s legs and released Thorn Trap.

“Arghhh! Uck, you, you, exactly what...!”

“I don’t need to take all responsibility just because I regressed. In the first place, it became things that don’t exist. Still, it’s left remaining in my memories. If I keep on pretending I forgot, I really would seem like trash.”

Then what should I do?

I used Thorn Trap on Kim Yongjin again, and took a magic stone powder bottle out of my inventory and scattered enough of it in the surroundings. The monsters nearby weren't all caught. They would quickly come crawling out.

"I hope that we really won't have reason to meet again."

I sighed once and turned around. Look at Bak Hayool, that guy. I told him to close his eyes, but he still watched it all and vomited. I went toward him and withdrew the shielding.

"Are you okay?"

"...Ah, yes. I, am."

"First, let's leave. Monsters will appear, smelling the blood."

"Yes, yes."

I turned back to the road we came on, taking Bak Hayool with me.

"It would have been good if they had listened when Hunter Han Yoojin-nim was persuading them with words..."

Around when we reached the cleanly cleared gate, Bak Hayool, who had regained his energy, spoke. I wasn't persuading them. I had unilaterally consulted them. It seemed like it looked like persuasion because he couldn't hear.

"Please do not pay any mind. Listening to them, they were bad guys who had already harmed many people."

"Really?"

"Yes. And this matter, please keep it a secret. Originally, I am in a position where I shouldn't wander around like this. The hiding skill is also a secret."

At my words, Bak Hayool had an incredibly excited expression. His recovery was too fast. Did he not feel a sense of reality yet? There were kids like this. Being fine the day of, and then crying and making fuss after two or three days.

"I did not know that Hunter Han Yoojin-nim was that strong! It was as much as two C-Ranks – could it be that you are actually stat B-Rank or higher?"

"It is not like that. Of course, my abilities are also a secret."

"Yes!"

“You can keep the secret, right?”

“Yes! Of course!”

His words were confident. I sent Bak Hayool a smile that said I would trust him. Of course, I wouldn't actually trust him.

I decided to take Bak Hayool and use him, but I naturally couldn't until I checked what kind of guy he was. In order to do so, I purposely showed him.

The plan had changed slightly, but I was originally thinking of showing him just the hiding and Thorn Trap skills.

If I directly came and helped and even told him about skills that others didn't know, obviously his mouth would be itchy. On top of that, he was a celebrity who met with a lot of people, and spent his time buried in countless words. It was an environment where he would want to thoughtlessly talk about the things he knew.

‘It became a bit more of a dramatic situation than planned, so his lips would also get looser.’

If he couldn't hold it in and spilled, then that was the end of that.

Right now it was that I was inside the impenetrable security of Haeyeon Guild. While coming here, I didn't release the hiding skill at all. I had ridden the bus while continuing to hide my appearance. Besides Bak Hayool, the witnesses would have their mouths shut with death, and whatever he talked about, all would be dismissed as lies.

'If his lips stay closed, it's a pass for now, or just end with using him for special skill public relations.'

It was three A-Rank special skills, so at minimum, about one of them would be useful. It would be good if it was worth the hard work.

"I really do not know what to say to express my thanks. I had thought that all Hunters were good people. They are people who protect us so that dungeons do not burst open!"

.....It might be that it wouldn't be worth the hard work. Bak Hayool continued speaking, smiling softly.

"Can I call you hyung? You are five years older than I am. I am twenty years old."

"Ah, yes."

He was the same age as Yoohyun, but why was he this different? Though twenty was still young, but still.

“Exchanging contact information-.”

“It is not possible yet. Please also delete the messages when we get out of the dungeon. It is better to completely erase the evidence related to Awakening brokers.”

We should part after I checked that he deleted the messages. Were they able to be recovered? Though I didn’t say that I would directly go to save him.

“For the time being, you also cannot contact me. If we are caught, it would become bothersome in various ways.”

At my words, Bak Hayool had a face like an abandoned dog.

“For how long?”

“For about two weeks. I will just contact you first.”

“I will keep your secret and diligently wait for you. Please definitely contact me. Do not forget me. Please.”

How long did we know each other that he was so eager? It seemed like it would get through right away if I said the keyword.

“I will put up shielding for you, so please wait here quietly. I will finish the dungeon attack and come back.”

“Yes, hyung! Please be careful!”

Seeing the bright appearance of him smiling widely and waving both arms, a sigh automatically slipped out. He really wasn't it...

I safely came back and washed and changed clothes. In the meantime, the number of social media followers had passed units of ten thousand. There was also a lot of foreign languages among the comments. I erased the messages between me and Bak Hayool, and uploaded a video of when Peace was young.

There were texts from Yoohyun and Yerim as well.

[Hyung, you have social media?]

[Ahjussiahjussiahjussi!! Please follow me back!]

It looked like Yerim also was on social media.

[yup]

[Tell me your account.]

I sent replies and then fiddled with my cell phone for a while. I slowly pressed the number that I still remembered. It rang for a moment, and soon the call was picked up.

[Hello?]

It was a familiar voice. It was a voice that I wouldn't have heard ever again. I had thought that it became dim in my memories, but it drilled clearly into my ears.

'Deceiving, what deceiving! At any rate, I don't have a team either.'

'It's okay. Don't pay it any mind, Yoojin. It'll all pass.'

Even one or two things I had buried away came to mind. I didn't know my memory was this good. It would be awkward to cry anew, so I smiled.

"I apologize. I called the wrong number. ...Have a good afternoon. Always.[3]"

I hung up.

Then, for now. I should do something about the Awakening Centers that would be set up soon. If that chaos occurred again, I wouldn't be able to leave it be.

[Yoohyun, do you have time? I have something to talk about. It's important.]

[Is it urgent? There's a guest here right now.]

[Who?]

For a moment, there wasn't a reply. Then, a text came from an outrageous person.

[It's okay with me, so come up and let's talk.]

It was the Seseong Guild Leader. Then, Yoohyun also sent a text.

[You don't have to come.]

[No I'll go.]

Since he was a related person. It would be better to have two, rather than one.

[1] 'rice cake' is used metaphorically to mean sth really good, so a better tl would have been sth like 'a piece of gold' or sth like that, but I left it lit. bc of the following sentence abt chirpie.

[2] ok so not sure what he means here. Namu wiki says that 'bamboo forest' is field-related internet communities where you anonymously complain abt your job, and for college students, it's an internet community page where you can gossip anonymously abt students at your school; think like yikyak, or my college had a '[redacted, my college's name] confessions' facebook page. So from context, maybe he's saying 'be my secret confessions group since y'all are gonna die and take my secrets to the grave anyways'.

[3] this kind of sounds weird in eng, but my dad said that while it's not sth you usually say, it sounds fine/normal/okay

Chapter 61: < Preparations Done (1) >

< Preparations Done (1) >

Han Yoohyun and Sung Hyunjae. The two people stared at me. Yoohyun had an expression that said 'let's just talk separately', and Sung Hyunjae had a gleam in his eyes that said 'quickly spill it'.

While sitting down, I let the silence sit for a moment before opening my mouth.

“It may be a surprising topic, but what do you think of Awakening Centers?”

“Awakening Centers?”

There were expressions asking why that was suddenly coming up.

“Yes. It should be about three months until the announcement. Right now should be the height of the interior facilities construction. If it is possible, could I hear an explanation about the Awakening Center facilities?”

Of course, it wasn't that I didn't know. Just how many times, and how detailedly, did they explain on TV? At my words, the two people exchanged gazes for a moment. The one who opened his mouth was Sung Hyunjae.

“The core of the Awakening Centers is an A-Rank item, Illusion Maze. It's a mind-related item that shows someone an illusion similar to reality. But for mind-related items or types of skills, if your Mental stat is even a little high, it often doesn't work. Even as an E-Rank, apparently you feel a sense of separation. But if the targets are Unawakened People, it can safely and realistically threaten them and make them Awaken.”

The Awakening Center's method of Awakening was simple. It showed you an illusion of being attacked by monsters and made you Awaken. It wasn't that there weren't any cases where people received a psychological blow, but it was a comparatively safe and accurate

method.

And obviously, most were Awakened with combat skills, possibly combat assistance skills. Since it was Awakening from trying to survive monsters.

“It takes an average of 17 minutes for one person to Awaken, and there is a limit of 30 minutes since psychological problems can occur. Currently, there’s a total of five Illusion Mazes that the Association possesses and each one can apply illusions to up to thirty people at once.”

“Then in approximately thirty minutes, one hundred and fifty people could Awaken.”

“It isn’t 100% Awakening, so in actuality, it should be a little less than that, but I heard that they’re planning on initially increasing the number of Awakened People to a thousand per day, and within half a year, up to three thousand.”

Even if it was just a thousand people per day, if it was ten days, it would be ten thousand, one month, thirty thousand. If it was the same as the future’s ratio, one out of a hundred of those twenty thousand, two thousand, would qualify to be a Hunter.

On top to that, did the initial thousand people only go for about two days? At people’s insistence, it rose to three thousand, even four thousand in an instant. They didn’t rest on holidays either. The news headline at that time: The number of Awakened People in the Awakening Center’s opening first month exceeded hundred thousand!

It meant that in one month, as much as a thousand novice Hunters had poured out. As a person who had been involved in the center of that chaos, I couldn't help but unconsciously frown.

"Don't you think that is too many? Even now, dungeons are being sufficiently and safely managed."

"Even if you said it was thirty thousand every month, there would only be ten among them with usable combat power. Practically speaking, you can't say it's a lot."

.....That's, well. That was right. In that person's eyes, you had to be at least B-Rank to be usable. Even socially, you had to be C~D-Rank for people to go 'oh, you're a Hunter'. Even speaking of F-Rank me, I was painted with the stereotype of being F-Rank, so there was no point in saying more.

"Even so, there would be hundreds of people getting Hunter licenses every month. That means that novice low rank Hunters who could go into dungeons would come pouring out."

If they had mediocre abilities and gave up on being Hunters, then that would be a relief. But the cases where they didn't do so would be a problem. Especially since, for the initial Hunters from the Awakening Center, there were hardly any cases where they gave up. People around them kept on goading them on, and even the TV prattled on that all they had left to do was to succeed.

“The quality of training would of course fall, and the supply of low rank items would become lacking.”

The Awakening Center Awakening wouldn't come with the registration subsidy, and you had to pay for the basics program, too. At that, it was a week-long boarding program before, but it wouldn't be long before it would decrease to three days, and finally one day.

“I know what hyung is worrying about.”

Yoo Hyun said. Then Sung Hyunaje also lightly pulled his laced fingers apart and lifted them.

“Clumsy Hunters would pour out, and clumsily run to dungeons and die. But Han Yoojin-gun, even we can't do anything about that. Anyone could easily become an Awakened Person. It's a cool story.”

It was obviously so. Just seeing how the line that stayed the night for days and days didn't break off, it was a story that everyone would think charming.

“But then noncommittally restricting that? Of course, for safety, about a hundred per day is an appropriate number. If it's that amount, about thirty new Hunters would appear per month, so it would be possible to manage them stably. But if a facility that could Awaken at most three thousand restricted it to, not even half, but thirty people per day, the soaring approval ratings would hit rock bottom.”

Approval ratings. Was it a political issue?

“In the first place, you can’t deceive them by saying it’s only possible for only a hundred per day. There are already many Hunters who know the effect of the Illusion Maze item. And even if the Awakening Centers said they would place a restriction, if the Awakening method was revealed publicly, private Awakening Centers would form without a doubt. It’s been decided that the Association would manage C-Rank and higher mind-related items and skills, but would everyone reliably uphold that? In the end, there’s no way to stop the outpour of unprepared low rank Hunters.”

“But if that many people die or get hurt, the social impact will be big. There is also a high possibility of giant guilds being tangled up in it.”

It was like that in reality too.

“We also know that. That’s why we’re planning on putting out a scapegoat.”

Yoohyun said.

A scapegoat. The one that suddenly came to mind was MKC. In the original future, they endured up to three years later, but... it seemed like the two of them getting together and whispering was about using MKC as a throwaway card and profiting.

‘Yoohyun. Originally, Haeyeon Guild and I were dragged into it.’

Of course, Haeyeon didn’t go so far as going under, and instead, I remembered that three or so big-ish guilds were beaten up as representatives. Guilds had monopolized easy dungeons, had luckily taken advantageous positions and there wasn’t support for latecomers, look at these three guilds swindling low rank Hunters, etc. – they were driven into a corner through the mistakes of several guilds, not the government and Association, and sensational journalists had poured out.

Though I was also busy getting hit by it, so I didn’t accurately remember things other than my own matters.

If it was something like MKC, it would become an excellent punching bag.

“And even if it wasn’t an election problem, it is necessary for the Awakening Center to produce Awakened People.”

Sung Hyunjae said.

“Dungeons are being managed safely, but it won’t continue forever. As you know, the proportion of high rank Hunters is extremely low. To make enough high rank Hunters with that low proportion, there is no choice but for many low rank Hunters to appear.”

Continuing, Yoohyun added an explanation.

“What the government and the Association want is also the many high rank Hunters. Industries related to dungeon byproducts are quickly being developed. And valuable byproducts usually come from high rank dungeons. But, even for the country’s high rank dungeons, though the management is done well, attacks can’t be done exactly matching the reset time except for the sole highly valuable minority. Since the number of high rank Hunters is lacking. Those remaining dungeons are also a waste, but it’s not far until it’ll be possible to bid for foreign dungeons as well. Targeted toward countries that can’t properly manage their dungeons and Hunters. So they want to increase the number of high rank Hunters even a little faster.”

Both had faces that showed that they thought it was a slight sacrifice for the future.

Right, well. Only about the first year was a fuss, and then it did get stable. As the number of high rank, mid rank Hunters rose sharply, dungeon industries developed more and more.

Unconsciously, I sighed.

“Hyung, don’t be so concer-.”

“If we make people stop on their own from going to the Awakening Centers, and find high rank Awakened People faster than the Awakening Centers. Then, there wouldn’t be a problem.”

A strange glint shone slightly in the eyes of Sung Hyunjae, who had seemed like he was listening to a young child's complaint. On the other hand, Yoohyun was hugely taken aback.

"Wait, hyung! What are you trying to do?"

"It sounds to me as if Han Yoojin-gun is saying he could do something like this."

"You have heard correctly."

Crash!

"Hyung!"

That guy Yoohyun kicked his seat and stood up. It seemed like he had guessed what I was going to say. Just looking at his expression, it seemed like he would grab the scruff of my neck and drag me out. I did good to say it where the Seseong Guild Leader was present.

"Don't get worked up and sit down. I was thinking of revealing it anyways."

"But....."

“Seeing the young master’s reaction, I feel more and more interest building up.”

It wasn’t anything much.

“I am thinking of making a special Awakening Center.”

I said, gesturing at Yoohyun to sit. He glared at me, and then finally sat down again. With his mouth shut tight, it seemed like he was sulking.

“A special Awakening Center?”

“Yes. Like what it sounds like, it is an Awakening Center with a specialty for Awakened People with special skills. Since the Association’s Awakening Center can only do combat-related Awakenings right now.”

“...Is that possible?”

“Yes. My skill can know an Unawakened Person’s possible Awakening stats and optimized initial skills. Even just knowing the optimized initial skills, it would not be difficult to match them and make the person Awaken.”

“.....Hyung, really.”

Yoohyun grumbled as if groaning. I also didn't think of revealing it, like our promise, but it was because of the situation.

".....Can you know without restriction?"

"Of course, without a restriction, from F-Rank to S-Ranks and higher. But, for the skills, I can only see the names and have to guess the effects."

Sung Hyunjae's expression became serious.

"Did you discover Hunter Bak Yerim with that skill too?"

"Please call it a coincidence before getting the skill. For my trust. Truthfully, is it not coincidence to discover S-Rank Hunters?"

"So, are you saying you'll stop people from going to normal Awakening Centers with the special Awakening Center?"

"Yes. The method is simple. The number of people that the special Awakening Center will be able to receive is 100 per day. Adding on to that, it will be known that if you Awaken at the combat specialized normal Awakening Centers, you will not be able to get your original

aptitude-based special skills.”

Of course, there was the possibility of getting it as the 10 level skill, depending on how much you worked. But it definitely wouldn't be easy. To raise your levels, you had to go into dungeons, and naturally only combat abilities would become emphasized. So usually, you'd get the 10 level skill as combat-related too.

“There is enough time left until the opening of the Awakening Centers, so before that, I am thinking of gathering Awakened People with special skills. While I am at it, it would be good if they are people with low stats and high special skills. The majority of Awakened People are F-Rank. If these people had also Awakened normally, they would have become ordinary F-Ranks. But because they Awakened to aptitude-matched special skills, they became C-Rank, B-Rank. It is that kind of story.”

A normal Awakening Center? That is doing something that will bury your hidden talent! Somehow B-Rank, possibly A-Rank, and higher than that too! Please look at this blacksmith with an SS-Rank skill, who was an F-Rank Hunter. Awakened Person, of course you would want to be one. But with a hasty choice, an SS-Rank special skill that is revered worldwide could be lost forever!

Something like this.

“Still, if you're limiting it to a hundred people, there will be quite some people who wouldn't be able to wait.”

“I am planning on announcing that once the data piles up and a system is made, the number of people admitted to the special Awakening Center will increase. I will just quickly check the skills and other people will do the consultation on the rest. Then, they would have a little more patience.”

Checking a status window was finished within ten seconds. If we computerized and other people took care of the skill analysis and consultation after I entered the data, over one hundred could be checked in one hour. And anyways, there would only be one or two people out of a hundred for special skills that needed consultation.

“If we only block the initial gathering for now, it would also not overheat from then on. And the Association’s Awakening Centers will keep restricting the number of people to a thousand. Please tell them to keep to the official public holidays and to stick to the 5 o’clock work ending hour. No, please give them a 10 to 4, with about a two hour lunch time.”

It was a sinecure.

“In order to do so, you’ll have to throw something at the Association too.”

“I am sitting in a place where there is a large transient population. I will find and bring them high rank Hunters. I can also fish out special skills that could have disappeared if they went to the normal Awakening Centers. How appealing is that, even just looking at me? Should I also go abroad on business trips sometimes? If I give this much, it seems like I should get something back.”

Magic beast rearing skill. I didn't actually have it, but if another one like this appeared, it would outshine new S-Ranks. And what about Myeongwoo?

An incredible gem could be hidden among the F-Ranks that would be cursorily Awakened, and would disappear in vain. I would be choosing to suffer and find those for them.

"If the government and the Association have their heads screwed on right, should they not give a PSA saying 'please visit the special Awakening Center first', instead?"

"That is also so."

Sung Hyunjae quietly laughed. Yoohyun gave an earth-shaking sigh.

"Good. There will be rake-offs too. Especially the overseas business trips are alluring."

"That is too dangerous."

Yoohyun frowned and continued speaking. I also thought that going as far as abroad was going too far. While I was speaking, it became excessive.

"Please be satisfied with dividing the country's Awakened People's information. By taking it by dates."

“Are you saying to put it up to luck? Anyways, it seems like we have to set a date and discuss it, but I wonder if there is a way to leave out Breaker and Hanshin.”

He was a greedy ahjussi. For me, it would be better to involve both of them.

“Ah, and I am thinking of making one of the costs for raising a familiar, be including a sponsorship for low rank Hunters. Of course within the country, but also overseas.”

Both of them had taken aback expressions. It wasn't like I was going to pack up and take money even when I was dead, and I was saying I would be making some welfare instead of the reward I should be getting, so what. Even with just getting proper training and being well equipped with equipment, the people who would die would have their lives saved.

There was no reason to not do something that wasn't hard to do.

“Follow me back too, boss!”

In the middle of the night, the Dokkaebi popped out.

“This is a present!”

The thing that was held out along with the cheerful voice, was an animal doll for some reason. With red fur, looking similar to a fox, and with a golden horn added... Peace?

“That’s the 30cm normal edition, and mine is the 50cm limited edition!”

Normal edition or limited edition or whatever, exactly what was this? Looking at the tag, it seemed like they had bought it in Japan.

“Is this possibly...”

“A Peace doll! Isn’t it cute?”

“It’s cute, but why did you buy it in Japan? Making dolls as you wish and selling them, is that okay?”

“They were selling it as a baby Horned Flame Lion doll, but it’s a weak excuse~.”

If you insisted it was a monster doll, then there wasn’t anything I could say, but Japanese guys were really... Like this, they would make Chirpie dolls and sell them too.

At the Dokkaebi’s nagging to follow back, I went into that guy’s social media account. On

the first display, I saw a photo taken wearing a bear doll mask.

“.....Di*ney Land?”

“I couldn’t go to Uni***sal Stu****!”

No wonder, I was thinking they were late; so they had done a ton of sightseeing before coming back, huh.

“It seems like you had fun.”

“Yeah! Of course, I worked hard too!”

The Dokkaebi held out the tablet. Looking at their social media, it seemed like they had done the work in their spare moments in between playing. Still, when I checked, it was full of data. Even the number of dungeons they had investigated was quite a lot. That’s right, it was good to do the work you had to do well and play well.

“So that’s Chirpie! Sticky rice cake!”

-Chirp!

“The glutton sticky rice cake that’s dating a magic stone bottle! Ta-da, look at this!”

-Chirp chirp chirp chirp!!

Hm? Why was Chirpie suddenly making a fuss... when I took my eyes off the tablet and turned my head, I saw the Dokkaebi holding out a piece of a magic stone to Chirpie. The color of the magic stone was silver. A-Rank magic stone.

“Hey, wait!”

-Cheep!!

As soon as it heard my voice, Chirpie hurriedly took the magic stone piece and swallowed it. That glutton! What were you going to do if you get sick!

“Don’t give that to it!”

“Why? It’s eating it well. Is boss possibly starving the sticky rice cake?”

-Chirp!

Chirpie cried as if replying, and received and ate the remaining magic stone. That brat. I

quickly held Chirpie up and inspected it. There was no change in the status window and it looked fine outwardly, so it was a relief.

“You’re picking up and eating A-Rank magic stones as an F-Rank? What are you going to do if you get sick?”

-Chirp!

“It’s not chirp. It might be dissatisfying, but I’m regulating you because I’m worrying about you. Hm? Monsters’ states aren’t properly known, so we have to be as careful as possible. We don’t even know the appropriate way to heal you.”

-Cheep!

As expected, it didn’t understand even a bit. That’s right, what was I expecting from a kid.

“Dokkaebi, you too, you can’t just go around sprinkling magic stones. And you can’t just recklessly give someone else’s magic beast something to eat. You have to ask and get permission first before you give anything. Okay? Not just for Chirpie, but for other monsters, animals, and kids, too.”

“You talk like my grandmother.”

Grandmother? What grandmother. Could it be that if the keyword gets applied to this guy, continuing from grandfather, I would become a grandmother?

Anyways, with this, the preparation to reel in Suk Hayan was complete.

Chapter 62: < Preparations Done (2) >

< Preparations Done (2) >

“You have finally contacted me. Can I look forward to it?”

Suk Hayan, with a gleam in her eyes, sat in the opposite chair. Today too, she had on a long dress that seemed like something you would see in a summer resort. And earrings in the shape of large pineapples were dangling from her ears.

“First of all, please look at these.”

I held out the tablet that had the Japanese dungeons’ data. White fingers flicked through the tablet about two times, and her eyes slowly became bigger.

“This is.....”

The movements of the fingers became faster. The gaze flickering up and down was busy.

Not that long of a time passed, and then Suk Hayan lowered the tablet she was holding onto the table. She took a deep and long breath and then opened her mouth.

“Data that was definitely investigated; is that right?”

“That is right. I guarantee it.”

“This much data in not that long of a time... And you definitely made a system and even arranged it.”

“Are there any places that need to be supplemented?”

“You should not ask me that. I haven’t investigated some of even the country’s dungeons yet. The Hunter Association is not being cooperative yet. Of course, it would be weird to give permission to someone who hasn’t even properly prepared anything yet. That was why I was trying to set up a lab.”

“Ah right, has Haeyeon Guild contacted you about the problem of the lab?”

Suk Hayan nodded her head.

“My uncle said that they have the intention to help. But I did not feel disposed to being affiliated to one guild. I don’t want the research results to be used too commercially. Of

course, I am not saying Haeyeon Guild will do so, but it would be good if the dungeon information could be used by anyone freely, or at minimum, by paying an equal price.”

“That is a really commendable attitude. I am in agreement. But, if usable results come out, it would be difficult for Suk Hayan-ssi to protect.”

At my words, Suk Hayan’s frowned slightly.

“That is so. Then would it really be better to collaborate with Haeyeon Guild?”

“That would not be bad, but I would like to offer a proposal.”

“Han Yoojin-ssi would?”

“Yes. You are aware that a monster rearing facility is being made, correct?”

“Of course. I even saw the construction going on, on my way here. Ah, could it be!”

Suk Hayan slapped her hand on the table.

“I saw it on the news! The monster rearing facility that is going up right now and the building next to it will be receiving the protection of five guilds from now on for five years?”

Could you be offering a place for my lab?"

She was sharp. I didn't need to explain in length.

"Yes. That is correct. At minimum, you could have your safety guaranteed for five years. A-Rank Hunters will be stationed there and in case of an emergency, we can receive aid from Haeyeon Guild right next door."

Of course, once the research results started to come out, that wouldn't be enough.

'S-Rank Hunters really are needed.'

Riette and her brother would really be perfect. They weren't affiliated to a guild and their abilities stood out. For now, we were mutual followers. I was thinking of putting comments on each other's accounts a bit and building some closeness for show, and then actually contacting.

'The best would be highest rank monsters, though.'

Magic beasts were much less likely to be won over by someone else or to betray you, compared to people. And they wouldn't be absent because they needed to attack dungeons. The problem was that for now, it was harder to find a highest rank baby monster than an S-Rank Hunter. It was exactly just two only, right now. Peace and the one coming by boat.

And guilds that could attack S-Rank dungeons wouldn't try to hand over the difficultly found baby monsters, either. If nothing really worked out, should I add the guy who is planned to be used for my protection? For me, I would be surrounded by crowds of kids anyways.

Right now it was just Haeyeon, but when baby monsters started coming in from here and there, even for just them, the guilds would know to thoroughly protect us on their own. It's a little awkward to say this about the kids, but they would be something like hostages. No, monster hostages[1]?

"Above all, it is a place where prominent guilds from, of course the country, but also the world will come looking. I am speaking of Hunters who mostly attack high rank dungeons with relatively lacking data. And since they would be visiting in the position of being the other party involved, it wouldn't be hard to extract information. Of course, I am thinking of assisting for this part as well. Not just that, Suk Hayan-ssi would be able to make connections with high rank Hunters who would need the dungeon research results the most. Depending on how you act, even without my help, the lab could become as big as you want."

Instead of being at a level of a lab, it could become a separate giant institution.

"Oh....."

Suk Hayan froze.

“Ah, is that so? I suppose it would be?”

“First, if they are S-Rank Hunters, all of them would come looking for you at least once. Especially if they need to entrust highest rank monsters, they have no choice but to come personally, even if only because it is uneasy to not.”

Or, at least, they would send several A-Rank Hunters.

“That’s, I, truthfully that sort of thing is difficult for me.”

Suk Hayan said hesitantly.

“My grandfather has a lot of personal connections, so even while earning my degree, I did not have much cause to ask for favors. So bargaining with the research instead of simply presenting to the research society, is a little... Though I am good at secluding myself in the lab for a hundred days.”

“You were good at making an offer to me?”

“Oh, rather than an offer, that was bulldozing into you. And I had thought that Han Yoojin-ssi was a research practitioner like me.”

Then again, she just thoughtlessly yelled, 'Let's research together! Let's collaborate!'.

"Please do not worry. In the first place, Suk Hayan-ssi cannot handle everything on your own, and it wouldn't be right for you to."

It was a waste for Suk Hayan to also do trivial things. And for things like related negotiations, a specialist should handle them.

"And you are not going to run the lab by yourself, either."

"Yes, yes! Of course. Right, will you look at this?"

Suk Hayan held out and showed her cell phone. There was a photo on the screen. Suk Hayan and five men and women who seemed like foreigners. From people her age to middle-aged, even elderly, it was a diverse group of ages and races.

"This is D-Mate. It is a dungeon and Awakened People research meeting that is on its 2nd year this year."

"A research meeting?"

"Yes. Of course, I haven't told them about the data that Han Yoojin-ssi will be providing. If it is alright, can I bring my friends over? All of them will be pleased."

At her words, I looked a little closer at the photo. The elderly person with grayed hair and the middle-aged woman were familiar. They were researchers who were under Dungeon Persons with Suk Hayan. I vaguely remembered them because they had even appeared a few times on TV with Suk Hayan.

"If they are people Suk Hayan-ssi can trust, then I will welcome them."

"You are saying something that is a little burdensome."

"Burdensome, you say. In the first place, isn't it Suk Hayan-ssi's lab?"

"Still, there are so many parts you are helping with, so I cannot act however I wish. Right, this one here is Jayden. He has more interest in Awakened People rather than dungeons, so if it is a place where a lot of high rank Hunters would come to, he probably would try to stay here even if he has to pay money? If he hears the news, he wouldn't be able to sleep for three days and two nights and look for Jesus."

The face of Suk Hayan, who was introducing the other meeting people, was bright like a light was shining. Her voice was cheerful as if she was singing, as well. It seemed like they were a team that got along considerably well.

'It seems like she'll do well on her own after I just give some support.'

To think that there was a research meeting. Then again, there was no reason people who were passionate about dungeons and had the ability would just stay still doing nothing all this time.

“Please take the tablet for now.”

“Could I? Are you not worried about the data being leaked?”

“At any rate, they are just a part of Japan’s dungeons. And I would like you to research other things before the dungeon formation laws. Things like degree of mana saturation.”

“But wouldn’t the formation laws be the most urgent?”

“That is true, but just for the time being. There is something I need to check separately.”

There was the matter of Riette, and there was a possibility that the dungeon formation rules would have changed from the original future. I should check when I would meet the system people in a few days.

It would be good if they let me know properly, refreshingly, this time.

When I returned home, I saw Myeongwoo pacing around the living room restlessly. Going around and around the table, he seemed like he was praying around a pagoda[2].

[Sharpening the blades of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 9,839/10,000)]

Now he didn't even have two hundred left to fill up. It would be finished today.

"You're that nervous?"

Myeongwoo stopped walking. Maybe he had slept fitfully last night because his eyes were bloodshot.

".....I think I did it too fast. What should I do if a weird D-Rank or lower thing comes out because I did it too fast and too carelessly?"

"That wouldn't happen."

I said concisely, and woke Peace and went to my room to bring Chirpie. After putting Chirpie on my head, I picked up Peace. It was a little difficult because both of them tried to cling. Chirpie at least quietly stayed apart for one or two hours if I gave it the magic stone bottle, but Peace didn't do anything like that. He wouldn't ask me to hold him when he was all grown, right?

“But... if a useless one comes out, it really would be disappointing, right.....?”

“Even if that happens, don’t be too disappointed.”

Of course, an SS-Rank skill probably would come out, but even if it failed because of the rare chance a system error occurred, there was no change in that Yoo Myeongwoo was an impressive guy. Since he possessed abilities that would let him be successful and live extravagantly right away as long as he took the right direction.

“No, not me, I meant you...”

Myeongwoo said with a gloomy expression. Hm? Me?

“Me? I mean, I don’t have anything to be disappointed about.”

At my words, the gloomy face evolved into an agonized look.

“Because you don’t, expect anything at all...?”

“No, no. It’s not that I’m not expecting anything. Of course I do. If I didn’t have some sort of expectation, I probably wouldn’t have waited for the last day and tried to go with you? But Myeongwoo, you’re impressive enough to me as you are now, so even if you didn’t get a skill at all, there would absolutely be no reason to be disappointed. Not just me, but Yerim

also comes to rob the fridge at the drop of a hat.”

One day, she had grabbed me and started with, ‘You can’t ever start a rumor that Myeongwoo oppa is good at cooking. Even what we have to eat isn’t enough,’ and went on a cooking review for over one hour. Though I didn’t know why she was expressing her appreciation to me instead of Myeongwoo.

“Truthfully, even if you went into the restaurant business instead of being a Hunter, you’d be a hit? A full-fledged restaurant would be busy and tiring, so something like a cafe would be good too. You could use part-timers for the drinks and just make enough snacks or cakes or something and sell them, and in that time, past a line forming, you would also be able to put out franchises one after the other. If you want, I can get a place for you.”

If Myeongwoo got busy, I would be sad, so I was against making a proper restaurant. It would become jam-packed, no doubt.

“.....I’m thankful for your words, but I don’t really want to do that.”

“Really?”

That was a surprise. ...Could it be he didn’t like cooking? There was no indication of that.

“Calm down, and let’s go down for now. We should see to the end.”

“Yeah.”

Myeonwoo, who was walking to the door, suddenly stopped walking and turned to look at me.

“Whatever the result is, thanks, seriously. I mean it genuinely. So Yoojin, if you’re not disappointed, then I’m okay too.”

“I said I’m not disappointed.”

When I told him again, his expression became brighter.

I went down to the equipment management department with Myeongwoo. Of course, an A-Rank Hunter also accompanied us, and it was while holding Chirpie and somehow Peace. Because he didn’t try to come down from my arms. Maybe it was because I had been busy continuously going into dungeons and couldn’t pay him attention lately, but he was stubborn for a while so I just took him along.

Thanks to that, the equipment management team people’s gazes were strange, but whatever. Should I have put Chirpie on my shoulder instead of my head? But it wouldn’t have been able to balance well on my shoulder.

Meanwhile, the workroom that Myeongwoo had been using had changed a lot from when we first came. There were two new big racks, the organization became neat, and even the lighting had been replaced for a brighter one. Even the chair in front of the grinder looked more comfortable and better than the one before.

“It looks like people paid some attention to you?”

Myeongwoo scratched the back of his head with a bashful face.

“Yeah. They said I was working hard. One day, Minsuk ahjussi watched me sharpen knives and told me to join the management team if I wanted to. Saying that I could just put on equipment if I was short on strength.”

If he had seen that, then that was a natural response.

“As expected, you really are impressive.”

Although it was awkward, him smiling seemed like his anxiety was definitely lessened.

Yoo Myeongwoo sat in front of the grinder. I dragged over the original chair that was pushed into a corner, and also sat down. When the power turned on and the machine started to work,

-Chirp!

Maybe Chirpie was surprised, because it flapped and then rolled and fell onto my lap, on top of Peace. It was briefly upside down, and when it raised its body and tried to dash to the machine, I quickly grabbed it. Was it fascinated by the machine working rather than being surprised?

“Stay here quietly.”

During that time, Myeongwoo had been skillfully sharpening knives. The still accurate, fast, and uninterrupted motions were elegant.

[Sharpening the blades of 10,000 bladed tools(Progress 9,843/10,000)]

The number on the opened status window also went up without a break. Peace didn't seem particularly interested, but Chirpie watched the knife sharpening with its beak open wide. Watching that, what was it understanding? Though it was a captivating scene even if you watched it without knowing anything.

Without room to feel it tedious, the number exceeded 9 thousand 9 hundred. Nine hundred ten, twenty, thirty.

He had said that normally he rested after sharpening forty to fifty, but today he didn't stop his hand for even a moment. I did worry that he might ache after doing that, but it should be okay because it was the last day.

And finally,

Clang

The ten thousandth knife fell on top of the pile of knives on the ground.

(Progress 10,000/10,000)

The status window's conditions disappeared. I looked at Yoo Myeongwoo whose movements stopped. Outwardly, there was no change. But his gaze was stuck in the middle of the air. He was looking at a message window that I couldn't see.

Did it succeed? Did it pop up properly?

An uncertain uneasiness finally came over me.

"...Myeongwoo?"

Say something at least. Just then, I heard a whoosh, the rough sound of a breath being drawn in. Thick tears fell. The machine completely stopped, and the scattered knives on the floor quietly reflected light.

I waited. I didn't need to wait for that long.

The chair scrapped back, and Yoo Myeongwoo rose from his seat. The face that turned to look at me had no trace of tears and was very bright.

It was self-confident.

"Yoojin."

"Yeah."

That guy's voice was calm. My voice actually shook more.

"I got an SS-Rank skill."

When I heard that, a smile naturally spread across my face. I had known that it would happen, but a smile came out like I had absolutely no idea. I didn't need to fake happiness, and was actually happy.

“Congrats.”

I didn’t speak in length. As if that was enough, that guy also smiled.

[1] the word for ‘hostage’ (인질) has the word/character for human 인(人) in it, so in this sentence, yj just swapped it for ‘monster’

[2] in kr, there are these pagoda-like things called 탑 that are usually in buddhist temples, and ppl usually circle around them to pray

Chapter 63: < Preparations Done (3) >

< Preparations Done (3) >

We went right back home. There were too many people with one door between us and them, for us to speak in detail in the workroom.

-Chiiirp!

Lowered onto a table, Chirpie stared right at Myeongwoo. I didn’t know the reason, but it seemed like it had received an immense impression. What was it thinking in that tiny head?

“It’s pretty late – what do you want for dinner?”

Myeongwoo asked normally. It was an attitude as if he hadn’t even seen the SS-Rank skill. But he wasn’t exactly the same as before.

The uneasy look that showed up at the drop of a hat, had completely disappeared. Of course his expression had brightened, and even his attitude, voice seemed leisurely.

It was like only the outward appearance was the same and the person had completely changed. That was reasonable, but still.

“Is dinner the problem right now?”

I spit out sulkily, sitting on the sofa while holding Peace. Why didn’t you explain the skill? I only saw the skill name so I was curious. I had thought he would have been so excited he would babble on about it as soon as we came home, but wasn’t he too nonchalant?

“Sit down and explain it to me a bit.”

At my urging, that Myeongwoo smiled proudly. That guy, he couldn’t have been taking his time on purpose, right?

“Sorry. You must’ve been really curious.”

It really was an apology that didn’t feel like it had a speck[1] of honesty. That guy sat next to me on the sofa.

“The skill’s name is Gold Forge’s Owner. Like I said, it’s an SS-Rank skill.”

“Forge? Just looking at the name, it seems like a production related special skill; is that right?”

“Yeah.”

That Myeongwoo nodded his head proudly. So it really was a production skill. Looking at the name, it was hundred percent that, but I had worried a little that something weird would come out.

“Exactly like the name, it’s a skill where you can make items. Of course weapons and defense tools, and if even a little bit of metal goes into it, even types of accessories are possible.”

To think that he could make anything as long as it had metal. It really was more impressive than expected.

Maybe he had turned on the skill’s explanation window, because Myeongwoo moved his

gaze toward the air.

“There’s no restriction on the rank of the items I can make.”

“There’s no restriction?!”

Wasn’t that too much of a scam? It was SS-Rank, so I had thought you had to do well to make up to SS-Rank.

“There’s no restriction, but with my current level, only low rank ones will come out. There’s something called ‘proficiency’ here.”

“Proficiency?”

“Yeah. It says that the higher the proficiency level is, the higher the probability of a high rank item coming out. And the materials’ rank is also important. There’s something called a beginner blacksmith’s production encyclopedia, but here... only up to A-Rank items come up. It says ‘Please use as reference to a certain extent, and demonstrate your own strength for genuine item production’?”

It seemed like instead of a restriction on the produced item’s rank, it was affected significantly by the Awakened Person’s competency. Acquiring it also made him do physical labor, and was it saying to keep on doing physical labor even afterwards?

But.

“.....The skill explanation window seems quite detailed?”

Just listening to it roughly, the explanation was long and what was with that production encyclopedia? Wasn't it too kind?

“You're right. Unlike Whetstone, it's detailed. Is it because it's an SS-Rank skill?”

...I wanted to show him my L-Rank skills that only came with one little line of explanation. Look here, system people? Wasn't this too discriminatory?

Putting aside the resistance skills, wasn't the My Brat skill explanation too lacking?

“The way I know it, rank and skill explanation length doesn't really have a relationship.”

It was so just looking at Yoohyun. The Green Willow Leaves skill had just one line of explanation as ‘make many willow leaves to disturb the enemy’.

“Then because it's a special skill? Even just the basic explanation page is 5 pages. And the

production encyclopedia is over three hundred pages.”

Wow, really, it was really too much. I really was made to tear out my hair[2] because of the skill explanation, and then you gave even a book to Myeongwoo?

The system guys pretended to be interested in me, but was it actually that their real target was Myeongwoo? Did they just need me for acquiring the SS-Rank production skill? After uselessly pretending to be friendly. I felt a sense of betrayal.

“...Well, it’s good if the explanation is detailed.”

“And a pack of materials also appeared in my inventory.”

Hey, you system guys! That was too openly discriminatory! They really gave him a lot. Myeongwoo took out a pouch from his inventory. It was small enough to be used as a handbag. So they didn’t give him that much, in the end.

“It’s called a subspace pouch.”

“.....Subspace?”

“Apparently up to 1 ton can go inside here? It’s fascinating.”

Myeongwoo admired. 1 ton in that small thing... was it an assistant inventory? It wasn't that there weren't space-related items, but it was my first time hearing of it.

"Look at this. It's an S-Rank material, a Thousand-Year Unicorn Horn. This here is called a Piece of a Hidden Star, and it's an SS-Rank ore. They're too much of a waste to use now. All of them seem like they're S-Rank and higher?"

"Really... that's impressive....."

It was good that high rank materials were rolling in like a ball, it really was good.I mean, it's a great thing to happen. It was better than not giving anything. If you had 1 ton of S-Rank and higher materials, you could build up your proficiency and quickly churn out S-Rank and higher items. It was great.

-Chirp chirp!

On the table, Chirpie ran toward Myeongwoo and then tumbled to the floor. No, it also seemed like it was aiming for the pouch instead of Myeongwoo.

"Could there be magic stones in there?"

"Magic stones? Maybe..."

After rummaging around in the pouch, Myeongwoo took out something like a transparent crystal. It was a gem that was slightly bigger than a young child's head.

-Cheep cheep cheep! Chirp! Cheep chirp!!!

"Put it back, quickly!"

"Uh, okay."

When the gem disappeared, Chirpie became blank and collapsed to the floor. It was an expression that was past dispiritedness and like it had lost its country[3]. That complex feelings could dwell in those tiny eyes like that; it was surprising.

-Chee...eep...

"Chirpie, come here."

-Cheeep... cheep...

Geez, this kid. When I lifted it up, it drooped like a wet plushie.

“Exactly what was that?”

“Just an SS-Rank magic stone.”

SS-Rank magic stones were definitely white, though. Did people just say that the transparent things were white? I had never seen one for real, so I didn’t know.

“Chirpie. Throw away your greed. Anyways, I gave you a D-Rank magic stone today.”

-Cheeeep...

“When you get a little bigger, I’ll raise the rank for the magic stones too.”

Though I didn’t know if it would grow properly.

Maybe because of the error, even the taming failed on Chirpie. Applying the keyword was possible, but the status window was still expressed in just □□. Of course, I couldn’t see the growth conditions either, and the My Brat skill also didn’t work, like the taming.

Well, there wasn’t much of a problem if it stayed F-Rank. And it wasn’t like I couldn’t afford its food costs. Of course, if it tried to eat an SS-Rank magic stone like just a while ago, even

the richest person in the world would go bankrupt.

“Right, my stats also rose.”

Myeongwoo said, putting the pouch back into his inventory.

“Your stats? Even though your level didn’t go up too? Without an increase effect from a skill or a title?”

“Yeah. Without any of that, they just went up as I got the skill.”

A stat rank was decided by levels versus number. If the the stats increased without the levels going up, that meant the rank went up.

“...Let’s calculate it. How much is your stats average? Taking out Mana.”

“The average is... about 21?”

If it was 21, compared to level.....

“It’s E-Rank. And on the higher side among E-Ranks.”

It would be closer to D-Rank. To the point that, depending on the growth, the possibility of going up to D-Rank was high. It was my first time hearing that your stat rank grew because you earned a skill.

“Then am I E-Rank now?”

Myeongwoo said, smiling brightly. Why did he have so many exceptions?

“Only your stats are E-Rank, and your Hunter rank would probably be B at minimum. When the proficiency goes up, you’ll be recognized as up to A. For S-Rank, a basic condition is having the ability to participate in an S-Rank dungeon attack, so it would be hard.”

It was an unreasonable condition. It was the same as meaning that only combat aptitudes could become S-Rank.

Anyways, now.

“Myeongwoo, what do you want to do?”

It was time to think about the future.

“For now, there are no item production skill holders except for you. And at that, it’s a skill rank SS and unrestricted produced item rank, so you could be called an existence that is unrivaled in the Hunter community.”

“It’s a bit embarrassing hearing that from you.”

Myeongwoo had a bashful expression.

“It’s just the simple truth. S-Rank and higher items are rare. Even if you attack S-Rank dungeons, usually S-Rank byproducts including magic stones come out, and things you could call items don’t come out that much. Especially things like weapons and defense tools are precious, so you would get them as a first attack bonus, and otherwise, it’s at a level where they’re hard to even see.”

“They only come out in the one first attack?”

“There are times when they do come out in normal attacks, but usually it’s like that. Up to now, the S-Rank weapons that have come out in the country are just fifteen, and there are no SS-Rank weapons at all.”

5 year later, they did increase a lot. Since the number of S-Rank dungeons and their level of difficulty went up. Even so, the number of well-known SS-Rank weapons couldn’t reach thirty. The last was the news that the twenty-eighth SS-Rank weapon had come out. There were more defense tools, and minor equipment types were in the hundreds, though.

“If you just stably make S-Rank weapons, it would be easy to establish yourself. It’s not that it’s impossible for you to be replaced, but the scarcity is plenty high. If you make even SS-Rank weapons, you would receive more interest than me? Familiars are an assistance to a certain extent, but weapons raise a Hunter’s ability itself.”

Unless it was an unusual case like Kang Soyoung, if you had to choose between a familiar and a weapon, a hundred out of hundred would choose the latter. It was a choice that made dungeon attack times shorter and made you stronger so that it was safer, so would there be any need to think long about it?

“And in the rare possibility that you make an SSS-Rank or higher weapon. Yoo Myeongwoo, you would become the sole existence that could raise an S-Rank Hunter’s rank.”

On average, if you were fully equipped with equipment that were two ranks higher, you could see it as the Hunter rank practically going up by one rank. But there was a limit to the rank supplementation caused by equipment, so even if an F-Rank plastered on S-Rank equipment, about high grade D-Rank was the limit. The other ranks were similar.

A B-Rank could plaster on S-Rank equipment and become about A-Rank. If an A-Rank plastered on SS-Rank equipment, in theory, they could have an S-Rank’s ability.

It was up to exactly that. Since SSS-Rank equipment had never come out before.

“There is nobody in the world who would look down on your status. All the S-Rank Hunters would probably depend on you. Since, if you’re chosen by Yoo Myeongwoo, you could become the world’s strongest Hunter. The first ever Hunter with SS-Rank abilities! It’s cool, it’s impressive. Isn’t it the best?”

Thinking of it while I was speaking, it was worth specially giving a lot to Myeongwoo. Since there wasn’t a restriction on produced item rank, couldn’t L-Rank come out, too? And there was the wish stone, myth rank items, too.

Myth rank equipment. Instead of being about SSS-Rank, you could become a Hunter with L-Rank abilities. Since the equipment rank versus Hunter rank growth was all theory starting from S-Rank.

“Aren’t you inflating it too much?”

“It’s an objective truth. But I think it’s impossible for you to immediately stand alone. For the very first thing, there’s the problem of safety, and after that, there’s the problem of materials’ supply and demand. Since you need to practice a lot to build up the proficiency.”

He could buy materials and then make and sell items. But the time spent on buying and selling was a waste. In the beginning, only low rank items would appear, and low ranks sold worse than you would think. It was because the purchasing power of low rank Hunters was relatively low. And there weren’t that many Hunters because it was before the Awakening Centers were made.

So it was a lot more effective to get support and get a ton of materials and make a ton of items.

“The most comfortable road would really be entering a giant guild. Once they check the skill, they wouldn’t skimp on support, and it would be possible to grow quickly. Outside of that, they would take care of everything for you. You don’t have to pay attention to miscellaneous things and just produce items.”

And it could be that that would be better for Myeongwoo. Since it was comfortable for both his mind and body.

“But if you don’t want to be affiliated to a guild, and don’t want to get interference and want to set up something like an independent workshop, I can help you. No, I want to make an investment.”

Now, it wasn’t helping, like before. Since Yoo Myeongwoo could go anywhere and be welcomed.

“Investment?”

“Yeah. You also know that I’m going to leave Haeyeon soon. So... I’m suggesting we go together. It’s just a suggestion and you don’t have to feel burdened. Being affiliated to a guild definitely is comfortable.”

If it was possible, I didn't want Myeongwoo to be affiliated to a particular guild. Since, if he entered a particular guild, there was no reason that guild wouldn't try to monopolize the items, especially the S-Rank and higher equipment. It might've been different if the increase of the dungeons' level of difficulty and number went up slowly over the span of 5 years, like before, but a monopoly in the current situation wasn't good. And above all, it was highly likely they would try to control the number of equipment made. Since it would be easier to maintain a premium if the amount didn't cross a suitable limit.

"If you're going to enter a guild, enter Haeyeon. For my sake."

Still, if it was Haeyeon Guild, I would be able to interfere somehow. And I could put a prohibition on excessive monopoly or on amount restriction in the contract conditions.

"If I become self-reliant, even if I get your help, Yoojin, there'd probably be a lot of things I'd have to handle on my own."

Myeongwoo said calmly.

"No matter how I look at it, it seems so. All I can do for you is supplying a safe place, as well as materials and funds, and connecting you with Hunters coming to find me. Still, if you make a few high rank items, and show them, the rumor would spread pretty fast. If an S-Rank or higher comes out, you would have the power, so you could act however you want ... or even so, that in itself could be tiring too."

Famous Hunters lining up, and wielding items as hostages, needed to fit your aptitude too. If you were timid, that situation in and of itself would be stressful. And there would definitely be empty-headed guys who would look down on him and act haughty if he seemed even the slightest bit easygoing.

As expected, should I just tell him to enter Haeyeon Guild?

“Just choose whatever makes you comfortable.”

He had already suffered a lot. I couldn't tell him to suffer more.

“Truthfully, I didn't even think a skill this good would come out.”

Myeongwoo scratched the back of his head.

“But, by your words, as long as I try, I can become bigger than a giant guild. Right?”

“Of course.”

“Then I don't have to think for long. Being stupidly shut up at home was enough with just once.”

At him saying that while raising his body, my heart pointlessly stung. I completely didn't let him outside, but it wouldn't be my fault, right? He was probably talking about the time when I was kidnapped.

"If something like that happens again. Then....."

He didn't continue his words and smiled.

"Do you want to explore my forge?"

"...What?"

It was something you could explore?

[1] lit. 'as much as an ant's eye gunk' where 'as much as/like eye gunk' is a way of saying sth is small, but he put in 'ant' which makes it even tinier

[2] lit. 'grab the back of my head and thump my chest' which is a way of expressing (mental) distress/agony, but the only thing similar to that I could think of in eng was 'tear one's hair out'

[3] according to my dad, since kr has a history of losing its independence at times, the biggest and most recent being to jp in wwii, this is a common expression used to express losing sth v important, i guess similar to the more gen eng 'losing one's world

Chapter 64: < Sunbae-nim? >

< Sunbae-nim? >

"It's a skill, but the way you're talking makes it seem like there's an actual thing?"

"There is."

".....There is?"

It wasn't like fire or ice bursting out, so what, a forge comes out? This was also the first time I've heard of such a skill.

"Specifically, it's written that you can go into the subspace that the Gold Forge is in."

"Wow....."

Wow. What was that. That was too different from the style of skills I knew.

‘Instead of a skill, it seems closer to an item.’

Like the S-Rank trap item Gingerbread House[1] or SS-Rank defense item Darkroom of Silence. They were special items that came out a long time later. But I hadn’t heard of or seen a skill that could make something like a building. Skills were fundamentally intangible abilities. It pulled in and gathered energy or elements to make simple forms, but to think it was a forge. Did it have everything like a brazier and an anvil? Did that make any sense?

“How do you go in?”

I asked, rising from my seat.

“Just.”

Myeongwoo held his hand out towards me. To go in, did you just go in? First, I put Peace in his pen, and lowered Chirpie to the sofa.

I was a little suspicious about the safety, but that was why I wanted more and more to follow in at least once. There was still a little left in the application time for the Last Repayment.

“You can take anybody inside?”

“If I want.”

“Then you could use it as a hiding place. Could you store something like emergency food supplies?”

I said, grabbing the held out hand. If the subspace that the Forge was in was safe, it would become an excellent refuge in possible scenarios.

The feeling of going through a dungeon gate suddenly came over me, and in front of my eyes, the scenery changed.

It was indoors where sunlight was shining through a large window. The very first thing I saw was a wavering fire inside of a large kiln. The fire with a tint of gold was, far from burning on firewood, burning by itself without a single straw.

Unsuited to its name, the walls were entangled with tree trunks and roots. The thick smell of wood and fire hung in the air. I saw a place where a hammer, large tongs, and other tools I didn't know the names of, were hung.

It was an old, old-style forge. In the middle, on top of a large anvil, there was a bouquet of flowers and one memo sheet. Out of the blue.

“...Exactly what could that bouquet be.”

“I wonder.”

Myeongwoo went toward the anvil and picked up the memo. I wondered what it said, but it wasn't Korean letters, and it wasn't hanja[2] or the roman alphabet[3] either. They were letters I had never seen before in my life.

“I think this was sent to me.”

“To you, Myeongwoo? You can read it?”

“Yeah... Welcome, successor. May there be the blessing of molten iron and flames in your future. Is what it says.”

As expected, it was an item, not a skill. Seeing how it said successor or whatever, it seemed like some unknown sunbae-nim had prepared it for him.

“It seems like it's saying I'm the successor, but then does that mean there was someone who had gotten the Gold Forge's Owner skill before me?”

Myeongwoo asked, tilting his head.

“Maybe. It’s only been barely 3 years since Awakened People appeared, so instead of simple sunbae-hoobae, saying successor and such should be hard. And there hasn’t been any produced equipment in the meantime. At the least, you should be the first in the world we live in.”

As I spoke, the system administrators came to mind. Would the person who had the past Gold Forge’s Owner skill be among them? And they had prepared various items for the next generation skill holder, like this? Was something like that possible?

‘Who exactly are those people? The things to ask keep on increasing.’

Just then, Myeongwoo turned the memo over to the backside.

“There’s something written here too... Ismual[4]?”

Whoosh!

“Step back!”

The kiln’s fire abruptly shot up. I quickly tried to stand in front of Myeongwoo, but that Myeongwoo, far from stepping back, stood in front instead.

“Yoojin, you stand back! Right now your stat rank is lower.”

...Well, it was still in the middle of the Last Repayment application. But I couldn't say that.

“.....I have a shielding skill item. The one the Seseong Guild Leader gave me.”

Though I was thinking of using it for Myeongwoo-.

“You were going to use that on me anyways.”

...When did he get so sharp. But right now, my stats were over B-Rank and I didn't exactly need B-Rank shielding.....

“No, it wasn't like that. It wasn't not like that either... Before that, look at that!”

I changed the subject and pointed to the towering fire. While we weren't looking, it had formed into a shape similar to a person. It shifted between a round child's and a tall adult's height several times, before settling in a middle appearance.

Then it completely turned into an appearance like a human.

It was an appearance produced by fire, so it wasn't a real human no matter how you looked

at it. Was that also an item?

“I greet you, owner.”[5]

...It talked?!

“It talks?!”

Myeongwoo was also surprised. It was my first time seeing a different species? that talked. Excluding the system people. Since I hadn’t personally seen those people.

“I am the elemental[6] born from the creator’s last breath, Ismual.”

“.....There are things like elementals?”

“.....I don’t know either.”

At Myeongwoo’s question, I shook my head from side to side. Did elementals really exist? Elementals like salamanders and sylphs appeared in things like games and novels, and I had never heard of them existing in reality. And of course, there weren’t Awakened People who had things like elemental summoning skills.

But suddenly, an elemental. What was that.

While we were taken aback, the self-styled elemental Ismual looked down at us with emotionless gold eyes. Was it a living being?

‘Would the Seed-Leaf skill work?’

In order to check, I used the skill. But... the status window didn’t appear. Instead, the information popped up in my mind.

‘...Fire elemental, super strong, and handles flames. It’s in a state where it’s done growing. The contractor is the person next to me. What is this?’

The words weren’t written on a rectangular window, and I directly felt the information. And compared to the written ones, it was ambiguous. If it was this strong of a feeling, then what was the rank? It seemed like it would be A at least. The sensitivity for the skills wasn’t good. I couldn’t tell, outside of that it could freely handle fire. And, force didn’t seem to work on it.

What was it? Did a system error occur?

Taken aback, I tried to open my status window. But nothing appeared this time too. On top of that, I couldn’t feel what my state was, and the information didn’t come to mind. Neither the rank, level, skill, or title. I didn’t know anything.

It felt like I had suddenly been thrown into a closed room with the lights off.

“.....Myeongwoo, can you open your status window?”

“Status window?”

Myeongwoo stopped for a moment, before his eyes widened shortly.

“I-it’s not popping up? Awakening cancellation can happen too?!”

“No, it doesn’t work for me either. But it seems like skills work. And the stats are probably the same. Just... the system windows don’t pop up, I think. The inventory..... checking the contents is impossible, but I can take out and put things back in.”

I took out the magic stone powder bottle and then put it back in. Originally, you could also see the contents list, but right now, that didn’t pop up either.

“If it’s not that our skills disappeared, it’s a relief. Is it that this space weird?”

“It seems so.”

Was it free of the system's influence because it was a subspace? ...But wasn't Awakening itself a part of the system? If things like the window didn't come up but abilities were the same, then, did that mean it was different from a game-like system and Awakening?

.....My thoughts were getting complicated.

"Please tell me your name, owner."

Ismual, who was quietly floating in the air, opened its mouth. No, its mouth was shut and just the voice came out.

"Is it talking about my name? Yoo Myeongwoo."

"Yoo Myeongwoo-nim. Will you receive the basics training prepared by the creator?"

"Basics training?"

"Yes. If you have already prepared enough proficiency as a blacksmith through basic practice, then it is not necessary. But if you have just entered the road of production, fast growth is possible."

I didn't know who it was, but they seemed like a kind person who considered a lot about their successor. Did I not have a sunbae like that?

"Then I'll definitely receive it."

At Myeongwoo's reply, Ismual's gaze moved to me.

"My flames are safe only for the contractor. If your resistance to heat is not high, there is the danger of burns or death."

Was the workroom okay? It was made of wood.

"I'll go out."

"Okay. Ah, take this too."

Myeonwoo lifted the bouquet and held it out. If it was left here, it would probably get burned. Shortly after, I returned to my original location, the living room.

-Chirp!

Chirpie, who was quietly sitting on the sofa, flapped and stood up, noticing me[7]. Across

the glass wall, Peace also waved his tail. Seeing the kids' reaction, it seemed like time in the subspace and here flowed similarly.

'...I want to go into a dungeon right away and interrogate them.'

If I went now, an emoticon saying that they couldn't talk would probably be sent. Still, there weren't a lot of days left.

'Before that, I have to make Yoohyun stop sulking.'

After yesterday, he didn't even pick up the phone. It could've been because he was busy, but it was probably because he was mad at me. Should I give him flowers or something?

"What flowers are these?"

I looked down at the bouquet I was holding in my hands. It consisted of five big flowers, more than ten mid-sized flowers, and small flowers too. They were all flowers I had never seen before.

I didn't know flower kinds well, but they didn't seem to be flowers from this world. Especially the big flowers were faintly sparkling. Among the small flowers, the gold ones felt hard and cold like metal. When I tore off a petal, it wasn't real metal either. From time to time, the flowers, which were similar to orchids[8], on their own... moved.

They were clearly not normal flowers, but an explanation window didn't pop up like with dungeon byproducts.

They were really pretty, though.

"Is it okay to mix it with ice?"

After getting some frappe and coming over, Yerim looked at the cup in front of me and asked. The cup with ice had a mana potion poured into it.

"Wouldn't it not matter?"

"Looking at the color, it looks like orange flavor. Isn't it about time you got sick of it?"

"I am sick of it."

Was there any way I could not be sick of it? Originally it was okay enough to eat, not tasty, and since I was trying to drink it like water, it was slowly getting harder.

I held back a sigh and looked around the surroundings.

In order to look for B-Rank and higher special initial skill holders, I had borrowed an entire 1-story cafe by a street that had a lot of people coming and going. Besides Yerim, there were one A-Rank Hunter and three B-Rank Hunters. One of the B-Rank Hunters said they had had a part-time job at a cafe before, and was making all sorts of beverages.

“.....Should I try mixing a mana potion into coffee?”

“It seems like it would taste super bad. Instead, pour real orange juice into it. To make it thick.”

“I’m sick of the flavor of orange... Apple, too.”

“Then what about asking for a custom mana potion?”

“That’s a good idea.”

It would be expensive, but like this, even if I drank only two to three days more, past being sick of it, I felt like I would throw it up.

“Should I plaster on equipment prioritizing Mana[9]? I have too little mana itself, so I have to drink it too often.”

But doing something like that was also annoying. On top of that, it was summer. Grumbling, I turned my gaze back to the window. I saw passersby coming and going, passing the street. The goal was B-Rank and higher special skill holders. Of course, I couldn't miss A-Rank and higher stat holders either.

But I couldn't discover even one yet.

"C-Rank again. Nice to Hear Eloquence."

"Ah, it's that person, right? They're a teacher at EVS Middle; they're famous. Their lectures are definitely easy to listen to. Apparently a ton of cram schools sought after them."

It seemed like they had found their aptitude.

"Surprisingly, there's quite a lot of people up to C-Rank. Aren't there more D-Ranks?"

"Yeah. E-Rank and higher is almost half the people."

At my words, Yerim tilted her head.

"If the skills are E-Rank and higher, they would get Hunter licenses, but it's said that the ratio of Hunters among Awakened People is about 1%."

“That’s..... because the Awakened People until now mostly have combat related skills?”

I couldn’t be sure with what I briefly looked around at in the morning, but people’s aptitudes were mostly not combat. All this while, I had just passed by lower than C-Ranks without much thought, so I hadn’t purposely calculated the ratio, but when I thought about it, it was actually a reasonable result.

It might have been different if it was about a hundred years ago, but currently, how many people would there be with a talent for fighting? And it wasn’t like our country was still continuing the civil war, and was on the peaceful side for over fifty years. And there was no reason to handle a proper weapon outside of the army. Unless they were athletes that did archery, kendo, shooting, etc., it ended with hobbies. And they weren’t common hobbies either.

“If more than half of people had talents that were higher than normal, how much would the ratio for talents related to combat be among them? I think it wouldn’t be a lot.”

“Then again, just looking at jobs, it’s the minority.”

Yerim nodded her head.

“Since they were forcefully Awakened as combat-related, there was no choice for most to be FF. For stat F, it’s well known that modern people’s exercise is lacking.”

If F-Ranks were subdivided into plus/minus, there would have been numerous F minuses.

“I’m realizing it anew, but there really were a lot of people in the world who totally didn’t know their own worth and buried it.”

If the C-Rank initial skill holder who just passed, had just gone to the Awakening Center, something like an F~E-Rank combat assistance skill probably would have come out.

“That office worker over there, it seems like a skill related to singing, but it’s C-Rank. Last time when we went to the broadcasting station, I saw a few singers who are said to have good singing abilities, and one of them had an initial skill that was the same as that one.”

“Really?”

Yerim excitedly looked at the man I was pointing to.

“Shouldn’t we go over there and tell him? To debut!”

“Isn’t it hard for celebrities with just being good at singing?”

“Still, it would be better than living without knowing.”

Yerim gulped down the frappe and stared at me with a suddenly worried gleam in her eyes.

“But. If there are this many E-Ranks and higher, wouldn’t it be harder for ahjussi? You’ll have to help 50 out of a hundred people.”

“Ah... That’s true.”

I also hadn’t thought of that.

[1] lit. ‘snack/cookie’s house’ or ‘house of cookies/snacks’ but I think this is what it’s referencing

[2] he says ‘hanja’ instead of ‘Chinese’. Hanja is chn characters, but specifically those borrowed from chn and incorporated into krn with krn pronunciation, though they are p much exactly the same as trad chn, unlike jpn kanji. It’s probably to contrast the fact that he said it wasn’t 한글 (hangul, aka krn alphabet), which wasn’t created until the 15th c and widespread until after that, so before that, hanja was used for writing. I think the nuance here is that the note might have been in ‘krn’ (speech-wise) but if it was, it wasn’t written in either hangul, hanja, or ‘alphabet’ (see footnote [3]). Either that, or he simply meant that it wasn’t written in chn characters, not that it wasn’t in the chn language itself.

[3] here he says the eng word ‘alphabet’ transliterated into krn, so I’m assuming he means roman letters

[4] idk, it's 'ee-seu-moo-ah-reu'

[5] speaking w extremely respectful honorifics (obviously, since it's talking to its owner-nim, but I took out the -nim), and it's more '[this is] the first time meeting you' but I thought this sounded more respectful(?) / formal in eng

[6] this word literally means 'spirit'. According to namu wiki, it's rarely used normally, and is used when tl-ing from other languages; it's the word for 'elemental' in 4-elements media (air, fire, earth, water), and spirits in animism, and things like jinn and fairies, and in modern krn, the first two def mixed are generally what comes to mind to readers. I didn't know which to tl it as, 'elemental' or 'spirit', bc idk anything abt 'elementals', but I googled it and wiki mentioned sylphs and salamanders so I guess it's 'elemental'.

[7] he actually says 'pretending to notice me' but in this context, that's a cute/cheeky way of saying chirpie 'noticed' bc chirpie is a chick and a baby besides so who knows if it knows anything at all, but it's acting like it noticed yj

[8] the krn dict and the krn-eng dict gave me different def? All the krn-eng dict said was that it's a Phaelenopsis, but the krn dict said it was a dialect word for 'the perennials of orchids' but then listed just Oberonia japonica, but the pic in the dict looked completely different to the pics of Oberonia japonica on google. And then when I googled the name, one of the sites said it was Galearis cyclochila. So I'm confused. Anyways!! It's a flower. It's a type of orchid.

[9] fyi the word for the stat is actually 'magic power/strength', and the 'mana' in the next sent is the eng(?) word transliterated into krn. When it's talking abt the stat, I usually capitalize it to differentiate

Chapter 65: <Q&A (1) >

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"Hmm, wouldn't it be okay definitely Awakening C-Rank, no B-Rank and higher, and finishing the rest with counseling? I was thinking of hiring people to assist... no, if there are that many in the first place, shouldn't the Association know to assist me on their own? And I just send the data saying 'there are these optimized initial skills'. At any rate, I only know the skill names."

Why did I have to do everything? I won't. If I said I would take just the B-Rank and higher, the Association probably would be displeased, but let's just say it's my reward.

"Tell other people to do it, other people."

"That's pretty resolute of you, ahjussi."

"Resolute or whatever, is there anybody who would want to purposely suffer?"

Yerim exaggeratedly widened her eyes.

“There is, right in front of my eyes. That’s why Guild Leader is so cold[1] lately.”

“.....Yoohyun? He’s still mad?”

“He’s completely in a bad mood. Truthfully, Guild Leader – I get that he worries about ahjussi, but to others, it seems pretty excessive. Even if one or two more skills were added on, there isn’t much that would exactly change. If a gold nugget that everybody already wanted got two times bigger, it’s still the same that everyone wants it.”

It was completely correct. Whether it was added on that I could find out the expected Awakening rank and skills or not, the guys that would try to pull nonsense on me would still be the same.

“It’s true that guy is excessive, but still, I have to pacify him. And I said I would go into a dungeon with him.”

“Oh, don’t be like that and tell him while you’re at it. To be reasonable about interfering. And come over to me!”

...‘Come over to her’, what was she talking about. She was affiliated to Haeyeon at any rate.

“For dungeons, you can go with me! I can finish a low rank dungeon by myself now.”

Yerim said confidently. Then again, she would soon be 30 levels. If it really didn't work out, should I go in with Yerim?

“Do you have the time?”

“I'm an S-Rank Hunter. I make my own schedule! Please just say when.”

“Hey punk, you have to think about the other Hunters you work with. ‘S-Rank Hunter’ or whatever, you can't act like that already.”

“I can just tell them ahead of time. When are you going in?”

“Um... wait. Let me check with Yoohyun first.”

I sent a text saying that if he was busy lately, I could go to the dungeon we were going to go to, with Yerim. When I did, a reply came back immediately. When he didn't even pick up the phone these past few days.

[There's no need. I set aside some time.]

“He said he would go himself?”

“Ah- I knew he would do that!”

Yerim had a dull expression.

“Go with me!”

“Okay, next time.”

“While we’re at it, a place with good scenery, with packed lunches!”

Was she going on a field trip? Though a low rank dungeon would probably be at the level of a field trip.

As I became pickled in the mana potions, after completely searching everyone through to the afternoon, I found two B-Rank special skill holders. The actual special skill Awakening attempts were going to start after the building construction finished, so the Hunters that were on standby outside just took their contact information and names.

I had to gather at least fifteen people within two weeks, so it would be good if similar amounts as today appeared.

‘They said tomorrow was Garosu-gil[2], right?’

It was hard borrowing a 1-story in a good location. Though it all worked out with money to a certain extent.

“Peace, Chirpie, were you well?”

I wanted to take both of them with me, but the law didn’t allow it yet. It wasn’t like I was going around by myself, and there were A-Ranks and higher following me, so why couldn’t I? I should nudge the Association’s side to tell them to do some work.

“You came back?”

When I was taking care of the kids’ food, Myeongwoo popped out of the air. It was like that yesterday too, but his face was really bad.

Like that, he would die.

“It’s not something urgent, so why don’t you take it easy?”

At my words, Myeongwoo smiled, even with a complexion that said he was exhausted to death.

“I’m going to make at least up to A-Rank before the construction finishes. And my goal is S-Rank.”

“Isn’t that being too excessive?”

“It’s worth the suffering, so it’s okay. It’s much more worth living this way than when my future was dark. At that time, that wasn’t living. And now, I’m really living.”

He was really living. Hearing that, I couldn’t dissuade him further. I should make him eat the restorative medicine that Kim Sunghan sends.

After I used the Seed-Leaf skill over and over, I found three more B-Rank special skill holders. There was also one B-Rank combat Hunter. If only it hadn’t rained in the middle, I could have discovered more. I hadn’t considered the variable of weather.

‘Bustling streets aren’t bad either, but going through whole companies or schools really could lessen the overlap in checking.’

Once I handed over the results of special skill Awakened People, I should discuss with the Hunter Association and government and tour the country..... I should limit it to one or two times a week. I won’t increase the work any more. I won’t do any more than that.

“Peace, we’re going to go into a dungeon today.”

-Geureureung

I said, rubbing Peace’s neck.

“It’s where you used to live, do you remember? ...Though it wouldn’t be a particularly good memory.”

From Peace’s point of view, humans killed his family and kidnapped him. ...Was it possible for him to become friendly with that guy Yoohyun?

“Even so, it’s not like we can not do dungeon attacks. Though later, there were organizations that formed that said we had to guarantee a monster’s right to live.”

They had argued that dungeons bursting open was a natural phenomenon, so we had to make a protective reserve for monsters outside of dungeons. Though that didn’t make any sense. Would monsters quietly stay only inside a reserve? First of all, communication had to be possible for coexistence or whatever to be attempted. Since they were monsters that started off with attacking when they saw people.

“Still, my brother isn’t a bad guy.Though he’s probably the biggest villain in the world to

you. I'll tell him to treat you well."

I held Peace in my arms and patted him. It would be good if he didn't have memories of inside the dungeon at all. Though seeing how he wasn't acting fierce toward Yoohyun, it seemed like he couldn't remember.

-Chirp!

When I held only Peace, Chirpie circled my feet as if asking me to lift it up too.

"I can't take you. It's a D-Rank dungeon so it's dangerous."

-Chirp?

"No."

When I said it again, it became sullen as if it had understood. Lately, its expressions had become very diverse. And the things it was interested in besides eating also grew.

"Wait here quietly."

-Cheep cheep

I put Chirpie in the basket and went outside with Peace.

[I'll be down in the parking lot.]

After sending a text to Yoohyun, I walked. The Hunter next to the elevator greeted me with a smile.

"Will you be going down now?"

"Yes. I am going to go to the parking lot."

Without even me waving my hand, they got the elevator for me and even pressed the button. I shouldn't get used to things like this, but everyone was excessively nice.

When I arrived at the parking lot, I saw Yoohyun, who had arrived first. His expression was really hard. And it seemed a little sullen too.

"Please have a safe trip."

The Hunter who came with me noticed the mood and went back.

“Loosen your expression a little. Are you planning on going around advertising that you’re mad at me or something?”

“It’s not that I’m mad.”

“Then?”

“.....Do I even have the right to be mad?”

Then he quickly turned around. What was he talking about? It felt like he was going through a belated puberty or something.

“If there’s something upsetting you, tell me properly.”

“You’re not going to talk to me properly anyways.”

Oh, that, I didn’t have anything to say. But even if I said something, it didn’t seem like he would believe me.

“But it’s not like you’re telling me everything either. There’s no difference with unilaterally ‘protecting’ and keeping your mouth shut, you know?”

“That’s why I said I’m not mad. I’m just upset on my own, so don’t worry about it.”

That sure wasn’t worrying at all. Yoohyun opened the car’s back seat door for me. There weren’t other people besides that guy. With this atmosphere, it was better for there not to be.

“How long are you going to be upset for?”

“I’m thinking about it. What I should do with hyung. Truthfully, I don’t have the ability to handle it. I recognize that. I also know that I’m being imprudent, keeping on interfering with hyung.”

Yoohyun said, sitting in the driver’s seat. I felt weird, since he was saying that kind of thing. I really wasn’t much compared to my brother.

“...Why would you say it like that. We’re brothers, so whatever the surrounding situation, we can worry about each other.”

“It’s the truth. I have to acknowledge that you’ve left my hold, but I’m like this because I don’t want to, so there’s nothing for you to worry about.”

Cutting it off with that, he started the car.

Hm, I didn't know what I should say. And I couldn't say 'it's okay to keep on interfering'. But I didn't want to settle it by saying 'there's no helping it' either. Above all, the part where he said he didn't have the ability.

.....How was it imprudent for a younger brother to worry about his older brother? The same for the opposite. Though yeah, in my case, it was like a cat worrying over a tiger. Still, it wasn't like I couldn't.

The dungeon wasn't that far so we arrived quickly. It was a mixed seashore and forest environment under Haeyeon's management. The normal monsters appeared in the forest, and the boss monster in the seashore.

-Keuheung!

As soon as the monsters were visible, Peace jumped down from my arms. The Olgors, the monsters that seemed like they were monkeys mixed with cats, fiercely bared their teeth at Peace.

"He was like that with the Tooth Moles, but are there any cases where monsters get along well?"

"If the species are different, usually they try to kill and eat the opponent. That's why in high rank dungeons where several different species of similar rank come out, you can handle

them by purposely causing a fight between monster groups.”

“So it’s like that. You know pretty well.”

I nodded my head and checked my brother’s mood. While we were at it, we should properly talk things out.

[The preparation to talk is done!]

That’s right, talk. Huh? No, wait-.

Right after the message window popped up, the surroundings became dark. Then, one, two, firefly-like small lights floated up.

“...Yoohyun?”

I couldn’t see either Yoohyun or Peace. Was it a separate space altogether?

‘I can’t see anything.’

The lights were floating around, but it was just that. There was nothing they shone on, and it was just dark.

“Hey excuse me?”

If you pulled me over, then say something at least.

As if replying, the group of lights gathered in front of me. A rectangular window was made, and a Korean keyboard appeared. It seemed like a giant smartphone screen.

Deer: Hi, darling[3]!

Tree: Nice to meet you! How were you in the meantime?

Newcomer: Hello!!

Wolf: Hi, sweetie![4]

Water Droplet: Can you see it well? You can see it well, right? I don't know if it came up properly.

On the screen, words appeared in a row. Was this a chat[5]? Was it a chat window?

'First of all, so there's five, huh.'

After hesitating a bit, I raised my hand over the keyboard.

Honey[6]: Hello.

...What was this nickname. Change it. Weren't there any chat settings?

Deer: Ohhh, our cutie! So you've connected safely! Send me a welcome kiss~.

Wolf: There's a lot you're curious about, right? Ask anything!

Water Droplet: Not anything! Sorry, Honey. Please ignore those two. Uselessly barging in. Newcomer is going to block them soon. First of all, I will tell you the precautions.

It was a relief that at least one of them was normal.

Water Droplet: There is a limit on the information we can tell you. The connecting passage between that side and this side is narrow. Originally it was actually closed. Right now, the passage was forcefully opened, so it will cut off if the amount of information goes above a certain amount.

Honey: Does the chitchat also count as information? Can't I just use my name for the nickname?

Water Droplet: Chitchat is fine. Names are also information, so you cannot. Above all, we need to hide Honey still.

Honey: From what?

Deer: A guy we can't directly call by name!^▽^

Were they Vol**mort?

Water Droplet: Looks like they weren't blocked yet. Still, it is not wrong. Names are big pieces of information. If we mention it in detail, that side will notice as well.

Honey: Are they someone related to dungeons?

Water Droplet: That is right! The dungeons slowly increasing and becoming stronger is widening a type of influence. But, you do not have to worry. Honey just needs to do exactly one thing.

Honey: You must be talking about raising S-Ranks.

That was the only thing those people had directly demanded.

Tree: Correct this time again! Specifically, you just have to apply the keyword and gather exactly 50.

Water Droplet: More than that is fine too.

Newcomer: If you just do that, you can leave the rest to us!

Water Droplet: We cannot explain in detail. But please believe us. It is completely filling up 50 people in the skill window. You just have to do that.

Was it really okay with just 50? Then again, if I applied the keyword and kept on putting on the growth buff, they would get much stronger than normal S-Ranks. According to how they grew, couldn't an SS-Rank somehow appear too?

Honey: Then can't you change the keyword to a bit easier one?

To something like my previous 'do your best'.

Water Droplet: The keyword is not something we set up. We check Honey's skills and write down the names and explanations matching that.

Deer: I named all the Perfect Caregiver title's skills! Aren't they perfect?

So you were the culprit.

Honey: No, not at all. Then can't you write the explanations more detailedly at least?

Water Droplet: Oh that, Honey. There are two reasons. The first is that even we do not know people's skills, abilities in detail. It is exactly at the level of discovering a new type of rabbit, examining it, and saying 'this has long ears and jumps around and eats grass so let's say it's a rabbit'. We do not have the ability nor the time to thoroughly investigate them.

Tree: Thankfully, there's already collected data, so we're more or less managing the skill windows, but cases like Honey's is really an exception.

Water Droplet: Yes, this is the first time the Perfect Caregiver title came out.

Deer: Really □□□□□!

Wolf: □□□□□□□□!!

Water Droplet: Drag those two guys out right now!

[We apologize that the chat cannot be chosen at this time.]

It seemed like Water Droplet-ssi has a lot of hardships.

[1] lit. 'vigorously blowing cold wind'

[2] lit. means 'tree-lined road' but it's a famous/popular area in kr

[3] eng word transliterated

[4] both words in eng transliterated

[5] it's the eng word transliterated (actually 'chatting') so it means an online chat

[6] eng word transliterated

Chapter 66: < Q&A (2) >

< Q&A (2) >

Water Droplet: I apologize. Those guys don't seem like it but their abilities are good.

Tree: It's water that's past staying still for a while, to starting to rot. Water change doesn't happen at all here, you know~.[1]

Water Droplet: The second reason is, it is a beginner-use auxiliary system to a certain point.

Honey: Beginner-use?

Water Droplet: Yes. The people in Honey's world are like that. Take for instance, an ability to fly appearing one day. How would you realize that? Would there be anybody who would be like 'ah, I should try flying!'?

That was so. Who knew if you were a young kid, but if normal adults attempted to fly by themselves, they would be sent to a psychiatric hospital.

Water Droplet: That is why the thing applied that seemed the most suitable for Honey's world is exactly those status windows. A game-like system with rectangular windows that show levels, abilities, skill, and even rewards.

Tree: But since it's beginner-use to a certain extent, it's not far until it disappears.

Water Droplet: The adjustment level will be examined and in roughly 10 years, give or take, it will gradually go away. Sequentially, starting from the windows of the people who have already Awakened.

Honey: Do you have to take them away? If the status windows disappear, afterwards, it will be difficult for Awakened People to realize they have Awakened.

It was convenient in various ways having a system.

Water Droplet: Please do not worry about that. They have not adjusted enough right now, so people cannot feel their own abilities. And even if they felt it, they would be confused about if it was real or just a delusion.

Tree: Even now, if you're about S-Rank, you can slightly sense others' abilities. Once the system disappears, that sensation will become stronger. Among them, sensitive people will probably be able to sense even Unawakened People's abilities. That's why Honey's Seed-Leaf skill rank is on the lower side, compared to the current usefulness.

At any rate, I had been wondering if it wasn't too good to be an S-Rank. When the ability to check expected Awakening status windows became common, it would only leave the optimized Awakening effect once per month, so it was exactly S-Rank level.

Tree: Also, the beginner system may be a comfortable guide, but it's a restriction that draws limits too.

Water Droplet: It is similar to only being able to move within the system in a game, unlike reality. I suppose it feels convenient right now that ranks and skills appear clearly. But if it is determined like that, it becomes harder to escape.

Tree: F-Rank Awakened People can never become S-Ranks. Since, in the view of the system, the amount of growth for an F-Rank is determined. No matter how much you try, B-Rank is the limit. On top of that, initially, the system has a safeguard too, so it's hard to grow at all as a skill-stat both F, outside of exceptional cases.

Water Droplet: Since people keep on changing. There is nothing determined. Of course stats, but skills too.

Tree: And, we and the system aren't accurate either. Especially lately, our accuracy has fallen a little because of Honey.

...Because of me?

Newcomer: That is true! Can't you please decrease the frequency of use for the Seed-Leaf-skill? Just even 20% is fine. I think I will die from overwork!($\pi \diamond \pi$)

Tree: Each time you use the Seed-Leaf skill on a new person, we have to examine them and put in the expected rank and skills. Our side's time is regulated appropriately, but still it's a little hard. The time we can use in a day isn't infinite.

Honey: ...I apologize.

I didn't know they were actually doing it manually in real time.

Honey: I will decrease it to about half.

Water Droplet: Please do. If the accuracy falls too much, it would be difficult for Honey too.

That was obvious. I couldn't wrestle with a wrong skill.

Honey: Can't you possibly add the skill names intuitively?

Water Droplet: It is possible for new skills, but it is hard for skills whose information has already been saved. We can only touch a few of them. And, it is incredibly rare for skills to have never shown up before.

Tree: Truthfully, there's hardly any.

Hardly any, they said. New skills being rare when the number of current Awakened People wasn't that much, meant that there were other worlds, as expected.

Like the place where the Gold Forge's past owner lived.

Honey: Speaking of, it seems like solely the explanation for the Gold Forge's Owner skill is detailed. On top of that, you gave items too.

Tree: Ohh, that was the previous skill holder using his power. A cost was needed, and he sacrificed himself. For the future of others.

Water Droplet: He was a good ahjussi. As all the outstanding blacksmiths were, he was good at cooking too.

Tree: I miss him. Good people really do leave quickly.

The thing called cost seemed to be a type where you had to give your life, no matter how I looked at it. Seeing how it was sent as an item, it should have been thanks to a characteristic of the skill, too.

Tree: We can't explain in detail, but it's a really rare case. It's impossible with a mediocre ability.

Water Droplet: And it was 1-time only so the next skill holder would be normal.

Myeongwoo lucked out[2].

Water Droplet: For us too, something like detailedly writing down skill explanations is possible, but like I said earlier, this is the first time the Perfect Caregiver title came out. There is no information.

Tree: Just the Caregiver is also an incredibly rare title compared to rank.

Newcomer: That is true, this was my first time seeing the Caregiver title too!

Caregiver was? That was a surprise.

Honey: Isn't it just from being an S-Rank Awakened Person's guardian?

S-Ranks were rare, but it wasn't a small number, and there were a lot of cases where the parents had survived. So I had thought that there were a few other people with the Caregiver title who were just not revealing it like me.

Tree: It's a little different. To explain, we have to tell you about high rank Awakened People. It's okay right?

Water Droplet: Yeah. Since it would be good for Honey to know the information too.

Tree: You can only receive the Caregiver title if you are regarded as a caregiver by a born S-Rank Awakened Person instead of an ordinary S-Rank Awakened Person.

Honey: Born?

Tree: If you use the Seed-Leaf skill, the expected Awakened stat rank comes up, right? That's S. Not A or A~S. Among the Awakened People right now, there's exactly five... there are three who met Honey?

The two I had checked were Yoohyun and Riette. The remaining one was probably Sung Hyunjae. Then did that mean that all the other S-Ranks I had met thus far were all expected stat rank A~S?

Water Droplet: Truthfully, the abilities people are born with are not equal, right? Even in Honey's world, before Awakened People appeared, there were a lot people who alone stood out. Expected stat rank S are kind of irregular even among those amazingly endowed people. In the view of the system, rank S is the relevant world's main species' threshold. For skills, there are a lot of abilities that go past the body, so SS-Rank and higher can come out, but it is not so for stats. It is not impossible to break past the limit through effort, but of course it is difficult, and it takes a long time. At the least, in units of ten years.

The highest for stats was definitely S-Rank. So, even 5 years later, there weren't any SS-Rank Hunters.

Water Droplet: And expected Awakening stat ranks are, to a certain extent, the ranks of a novice who has just Awakened and has the possibility of growth left. Even looking at just the Seed-Leaf skill, it is optimized Awakening, not maximum amount or threshold Awakening, right? So being at the level of being between A and S is that species' maximum Awakening stat rank.

Tree: In other words, born S-Ranks are outside of the standard. Honey's is on the side of having a large population, so there are already five, but usually it's just two to three per generation. This minority outside of the standard, how should I say it, can't mix well with their own kind.

Water Droplet: A~S-Ranks also tend to look down on people with low abilities. But in extreme cases, S-Ranks could get to the level of not even treating them as the same kind. At the same time, their own kind, especially normal people, instinctively regard the S-Ranks as unpleasant. Somehow they feel cowed and it is a little uncomfortable to talk with them – it is about that level, but that small difference is quite large.

Tree: It's hard to properly play the role of parent if you're cowed by a young kid.

As I read the words on the window, I remembered when I was young. Yoohyun was cute. I didn't think I had ever felt him unpleasant.

Tree: So the Caregiver title doesn't come out much. And, that title holders' lifespans are usually short.

Honey: Sorry?

Water Droplet: It is just that the probability of being killed is high. They are cases where people could not touch the S-Rank, so instead the family was targeted. Disposition-wise, there are a lot of tyrant types. It is a relief that Honey's world is stable in that regard.

Tyrants, they said. It didn't seem like there was much of a difference from the other guild leaders. Not just Yoohyun, but I couldn't feel any weird points from the other two.

Honey: You said that I met three born S-Ranks, but I did not really feel that they were different. I do have Fear Resistance, but their attitudes themselves all seem fine.

I didn't need to say anything about Yoohyun, and Riette was also past being friendly to excessively clinging. Though it seemed like it was largely due to the Dragon Slayer title for Riette, even Sung Hyunjae, who didn't have anything like that, was nice.

Tree: That's because it's Honey.

Water Droplet: Your stats are low so you are not threatening, but your special skills are high. Combat-aptitude high rank Awakened People like that kind of thing. If you are S-Rank, you can directly feel that, so they like it even more. Besides Honey, there is one other person like that.

Yoo Myeongwoo? Or were they talking about the saint-nim? Then again, the saint-nim was

popular among the high rank Hunters. She was something like the doyenne of the Hunter community.

Tree: Just imagining it, it's really cute. I also □□□□□□□□□□ those past guys. Ah, oops. Sorry.

Water Droplet: Newcomer, thanks for the quick handling.

Newcomer: You are welcome!

Were those □ for blocking excessive information? Though it was a different atmosphere from Deer and Wolf.

Tree: Our stories are useless information, though. I just thought of past things.

Water Droplet: There's not much left now, so be careful. Still, Honey, please be careful of high rank Awakened People. They may fundamentally have goodwill toward Honey, but the difference in strength is so large that the goodwill could become violence. Generally, there are a lot of selfish and self-centered aspects, so it is even more dangerous. We want Honey to safely gather S-Ranks.

Tree: That's right. Safety is the best. It's okay if it takes a bit of a long time. About 5 years?

Originally, there was enough room for about 10 years, but as you know, 5 years disappeared.

Water Droplet: Anyways, it would have been hard to find a different method within the time, so even if it decreased 5 years, please do not mind.

Honey: Yes.

If it was 5 years, then it was sufficiently enough time. When Peace grew soon, it would be three, and one more baby monster was planned to arrive. And I thought I would bring over from Seseong, too. And if I put in Riette and her brother and the Breaker Guild Leader, it was already eight, and if Kim Sunghan also safely grew, then it would be nine.

Even if I was relaxed about it, wouldn't I gather all of them in two to three years?

Honey: Are monsters also included in the 50?

Just in case, I asked them. If it was limited to humans, it could get a little harder.

Water Droplet: As long as the keyword is applied, there is no problem.

Then it was easy. I was relieved of a big worry for now.

Tree: Is there anything you're curious of outside of that?

Hm, what was there?

I more or less knew the reason why they showed interest in me, which bothered me the most. I didn't hear in detail, but they said I only had to fill up with 50 S-Ranks. And I got enough information about the system. About skills, Awakened People... ah, dungeons.

Honey: Are the dungeon formation laws the same as they were originally? I am doing the related investigations.

Newcomer: They are the same! Only the speed became faster. Sometimes 5-years-later dungeons come out, but we are working to handle them immediately!

Then I only needed to make up for the speed.

Honey: Would it be difficult for me to hear information about monsters or dungeons?

Tree: The relevancy is too big, so it's dangerous. Some day, you'll be able to know, even if you don't want to.

Water Droplet: That is right. Honey will be able to know it all in the end. In due time.

.....I mean, it didn't matter even if I didn't know. The meaningful words were completely making me uneasy.

Besides this, there really wasn't anything else, right? Even if I asked about those people, it probably wouldn't be allowed. They had already been blocked with □. It seemed like I had found out more or less everything I needed to know.

Honey: I have one last thing. Could I possibly tell my younger sibling about the system? That guy is completely uneasy and I would like having one person to reveal it to. We happened to have come into the dungeon together, and it would be even better if you would send a message window to my sibling.

If he got a message from the system, he would probably easily believe me.

Tree: To your sibling? Wait, wait. It's dangerous for the information to spread, so not a lot...
... if it's at the level of saying you're helping us, then it's okay. When you send a signal, we'll send the promised message. Simply something like 'sstm'?

Honey: Yes, please take care of it.

It would be good if I could pacify that Yoohyun with this.

Newcomer: As expected, you think a lot about your younger sibling! Brothers and sisters[3] who get along well, are really great~▽~

No, he was a younger brother, though.

Deer: My love!! Don't just take care of your sibling and call me unni!♡ε♡

Wolf: I'm oppa!!

Newcomer: The two of you really have no conscience. Oppa is correct for me!

.....What were these people saying.

Honey: I am a man.

The chat window was silent for a moment. Then.

Water Droplet: Ohyeahohyeahohyeah!!!!!! I won! Newcomer, bring over the saw! To cut off Deer bastard's antler! Whooo!!

Excuse me, it seems like your character changed a little.

Water Droplet: The weight on my chest I had for a thousand years is all disappearing![4]

If they had a weight for a thousand years, then it was enough for them to change.

Newcomer: Will you really cut it?

Water Droplet: If you staked it, then it has to be cut! What did Wolf stake? Why is it quiet? Did both of them run away? Ah, I apologize, Honey. Of course you are a man. I thought you were so. I apologize for the bet as well. Those guys kept on insisting so I lost my temper.

Honey: It is alright.

Tree: If you don't have any other questions, should we send you back? For us, it would be fine if you hung out for longer.

Honey: Yes. Hasn't a lot of time passed?

Tree: Probably?

What do you mean, probably? Several days couldn't have passed or something, right? If it

did, then there would be a huge commotion. Even now, it was a little uneasy.

Newcomer: It has not been long! I am not sure, but it would be about 30 minutes at best?

...More time had passed than I had thought.

Honey: Is it possible to shorten the time, or something?

Newcomer: It is a state where we are connected, so it is difficult. Should we send you right away?

Honey: Yes.

Still, if it was about 30 minutes, then it should be okay. Now, I could explain about the system too.

The lights that were forming the chat window and the keyboard dispersed again, and the surrounding darkness turned blurry. Then, the scenery in front of my eyes changed back.

To a large field.

There was definitely a thick forest between the seashore, but it had all disappeared. I could

clearly see the sea.

‘Did... all of it burn?’

The ashes scattering around on the wind was ominous.

-Keuhang!

Just then, I suddenly heard the cry of a ferocious beast. When I reflectively turned around, a magic beast that was bigger than a lion, with red and gold fur mixed together, dashed to me. I unconsciously stepped back and used the Seed-Leaf Skill.

[2nd Rank Unicorn subtype[5] – Horned Flame Lion(Adolescent) Peace

Current stat rank B

Growth possible stat rank A~S

Optimized Initial Skills

Flame Breath(S) Achieve after growth

Blaze Run(A) Achieve after growth

Giant Fire(A) Achieve after growth

Flame Resistance(A) Acquired

※No growth without an adult's help]

.....It was Peace?

[1] what this whole part is referring to metaphorically is when an organization doesn't change up its members so it declines, sort of like the eng 'bringing in fresh/new blood'. Esp 'water change' is used metaphorically to refer to changing the members/execs of an institution on a relatively large scale. I didn't know how to put that in eng without completely changing it in order to make sense, so I'm putting the explanation in the footnote.

[2] back in the olden(?) times, ppl would form a 계, which is a group where the members chip in a certain amt of money and then they takes turns with one person taking the gathered money each time they meet up. It being your turn is called 계 타다 and that's the expression used here. It's used metaphorically to mean you (suddenly) got a lot of money, or depending on context, that you got lucky, since if it's your turn to take the money, it's a lucky thing.

[3] this is a word for 'siblings' but specifically 'brother and sister from the same family', which is why yj is surprised in the next sent, bc it's implying one of them is a woman.

[4] from the idiom '10-year old indigestion is going down' which is similar to eng 'a weight is being lifted off one's shoulders/chest', but here they changed it to a thousand years

[5] there was no change in the krn but i'm using 'subtype' here from now on, instead of 'subspecies' since i've been calling everything else 'type'

Chapter 67: Conversation

Conversation

"I mean, he-."

Suddenly, I was pulled over and hugged from the back by a strong strength. The firm arms tightened around my body to the point of it hurting. No, it really hurt?

"It hurts, loosen up a bit!"

I knew you were alarmed, but this was too-.

“Ugh, hey!”

My body was lightly raised, I was carried over Yoohyun’s shoulder. I tried to resist in my own way, but it didn’t work at all. Obviously.

“Yoohyun! Peace!”

Putting aside that little brother, Peace was just staring at me. He was following after us, frowning hard. Even though he wasn’t fully grown, the four legs stretched out long and the mane and tail became abundant, so it was cool. The horn was more sparkly, and the long canines were sharp.

It really was a heartwarming sight, but.

“Let me down! I know I made you worry, but let’s talk it out, talk!”

“...What more would we say here.”

A voice that was tightly suppressing anger replied.

-Keureureung!

And Peace agreed? ...It was a happy thing that they had become friendlier while I was gone, but Peace, dad is being dragged away by force. The other person was my younger brother, but it was undeniably kidnapping. But where were we going? It seemed like it was toward the seashore.

“Yoohyun, I’ll explain it all to you. Calm down and let me go.”

“Shut up before I shut your mouth for you!”

Right after the hysterical shout, I heard the sound of him grinding his teeth.

It was dumbfounding.

I did know that he would be really alarmed because I had suddenly disappeared. Since I would’ve been shocked if it were me, too. Still, he wasn’t even listening to what I had to say.

.....He probably wouldn’t actually shut me up for real.

“Just listen this one time. Truthfully, I-.”

“Hyung, do you really want to see me go crazy?”

Though you already didn't seem normal.

"This is enough!"

"I mean, what..."

"Putting aside the things outside of the dungeon! But this, exactly what... once might be a coincidence, but this is the second time! Why do weird things happen whenever hyung goes into a dungeon?!"

It was so, from Yoohyun's point of view. Since he didn't know I secretly went into dungeons. I had stepped into dungeons exactly twice, but the first time, a monster outside of the rank popped out and the next time, I suddenly disappeared.

It was enough to go crazy.

"I'll expla-."

"No need."

Come on, let's talk.

"I-."

"This is the last time. Stop talking."

It was mood like he really would shut me up if I talked any more. For now, should I quietly follow along and then bring it up once he calmed down?

The sound of waves came close and Yoohyun stopped walking.

-Geueuoo

I heard something like a repressed groan. Was it a monster?

"I even thought that it would work out if I put up with it a bit. Since hyung was establishing yourself well on your own. Now it's also past the point I can handle. So it's right for me to restrain myself."

The words were quite praiseworthy, but his actions were different.

"It's right, but as expected, I can't."

Yoohyun finally put me down. Peace came to my side and rubbed his thick neck against my hip.

-Geureureung

How did he suddenly get this big? When I searched the surroundings while I petted Peace, I saw a monster whose four legs were cut off. It was this dungeon's boss monster. The head that was similar to that of an eagle opened its beak from time to time and coughed out groans.

Why did he leave it alive?

"So I'm going to put it that hyung died here."

".....What?"

"Since I can't do what I want with a hyung who is alive. There's too many things involved for me to handle. Though my reputation would probably hit rock bottom if I say I couldn't protect one companion in a D-Rank dungeon."

"...It's not to the level of your reputation hitting rock bottom, but that you'll also receive suspicion."

It wasn't even a newbie, but an S-Rank combat Hunter with 3 years of work experience losing a colleague in a D-Rank dungeon – did that make sense? Even as a joke, it wasn't funny.

“And what about the consequences? Like you said, there's a lot of things left open.”

“It doesn't matter.”

The guild leader guy spit out irresponsibly. He was like a guy who had thrown away his life even with it all figured out[1]. Did I raise the kid wrong?

At any rate, it seemed like he had calmed down a little, so I should try to pacify him.

“What do you mean it doesn't matter? If you make a mistake, Haeyeon could fall instead of MKC. It's a bigger issue than kidnapping.”

“Hyung doesn't need to pay it any mind. Still, I have to decrease the suspicion, so I prepared things like that.”

Like that? What... the monster?

“To make it certain, it would be good to cut off an arm or leg, but I don’t think I can go that far. Still, there needs to be bloodstains or a piece of flesh. The Sea Rutum isn’t big enough to swallow a person whole, so they rip them up and eat them with their beak.”

Yoohyun calmly explained. I didn’t want to agree with the assessment that my younger brother was a crazy guy this way. Still, since he said he couldn’t cut my arm or leg, it did seem like he was less crazy.

I hugged Peace’s neck and stepped back. Peace might have also felt that the atmosphere was seriously grave, because he was slightly tense.

“Don’t think of laying a hand on me.”

“Sorry. I have painkillers, so it won’t hurt. And you can recover right away with a high rank potion.”

“If you’re sorry then don’t do it! I mean, I said I would explain? And besides, you think it’s okay to do whatever as long as just my body is safe? What, I should be thankful if I get forced protection? I was thinking we were only just getting along better, but now you’re saying we shouldn’t even talk properly for the rest of our lives and live indifferently?”

“Anyways hyung doesn’t have any intention of accepting me.”

“...What?”

What was this now.

“I was the idiot for expecting something. Or should I say I didn’t have shame? Hyung probably only wanted to quickly and safely prepare the groundwork.”

“No, I don’t get what you’re talking about at all.”

“Don’t pretend you don’t know. Hyung was hiding everything from the start. The magic beast trainer skill, is it really true that you got it at 10 levels? It’s weird starting from when you immediately said you would raise the baby Horned Flame Lion as soon as you saw it. The food costs aren’t a couple of cents and even if it wouldn’t be much of a burden for me, that you would take it without thinking it over, isn’t like hyung at all.”

That... was true. No matter how cute and lovable he was, there was no reason to immediately try to raise a pet for whom ten million won wasn’t even the body price, but the price of one meal. On top of that, I was an F-Rank Hunter who was living all that time as a normal petit bourgeois and had just Awakened. I should’ve waved my hands and been like ‘oh no, I can’t raise it’ as soon as I heard the food costs.

When I couldn’t say anything, Yoohyun’s gaze became even chillier.

“Exactly what was there that you told me truthfully and honestly? On top of that, hyung wasn’t taken aback at all over disappearing today. About the skills at least, I tried to bear it.

Hiding your own skills to a certain amount is something that's common if you're a Hunter, and there's no need to make an exception even if we're family.

But things like what happened today, that I couldn't even raise a finger against, that I couldn't understand at all."

Yoohyun turned his gaze to the side. I also reflectively looked to the same place.

It was the forest that was horrifically destroyed so that you couldn't even guess the original appearance.

".....There's no reason I could endure that."

The justification that I would explain it all only stuck in my throat[2]. I had to say something, though.

"Is there anything else that was suspicious?"

".....I don't know. Since hyung told me you love me, ever since then, continuously. At first, I was just excited and pleased. It's weird starting from the fact that you suddenly told me you were sorry. Still, I just pretended I didn't know, since it was a good thing. Because, it seemed like we had gone back to before."

“Yoohyun.”

“You seemed like the hyung before our relationship got bad, but you also seemed like a completely different person. I don’t know.”

Even if we were distant for several years, it seemed like family was family. I didn’t know that Yoohyun was feeling that clear of a sense of difference. I had thought it would be enough if I said I was sorry first, if I was of help in various ways.

It seemed like I had thought wrong.

“It’s true that there was a lot I hid. Like you guessed, I was thinking of growing Peace since I first saw him. For the Awakening skill, it’s true that it’s once per month, but it’s not simple Awakening, but optimized. Yerim was originally expected to be stat rank A~S. The probability of becoming A-Rank was higher, so you could say that I made her into an S-Rank.”

I swallowed a sigh and continued speaking.

“I’ve even secretly gone into dungeons. And I brought Chirpie over from those dungeons. I have an A-Rank hiding skill, and I can share some of my skills too. I have poison, curse, and fear resistance, too.”

“.....I knew about the poison.”

“You knew?”

“Because Hunter Bak Yerim read the Bricks’ D-Rank Hunter’s memory. The memory that he thought it was weird that no matter how much he searched, there wasn’t a detoxification item, but still the Watchman’s Fruit item didn’t work.”

“In addition, it’s L-Rank.”

“The painkillers wouldn’t work then.”

“Turns out I can turn off the skill.”

“.....The resistance skill?”

“Yeah. If you tell a passive type to turn off twice in succession, it turns off. Though normally, there’s no reason to turn them off.”

“You must have turned it off when you got drunk.”

Sharp[3] guy. I was the one in the wrong for trying to deceive a guy like that.

"I have skills that doubles dungeon reward items, and doubles attack skills. It's pretty useless to me though. My stats are still F and I don't have attack skills."

"...Hyung's status window is really unusual."

"I know, right? Even though I was honest, it should be hard to believe."

A huff of laughter came out on its own. Yoohyun also quirked his lips slightly.

"The skill sharing is only possible while in contact. The standby time for usage is 15 days."

I left out the My Brat and Our[4] Kid that couldn't have its effect known. Also the awkward-to-explain Last Repayment and Laughtas' Natural Enemy. I wanted to refreshingly spill about the regression too, but.

[' ^ ' >>∞<< ' = ' 📖 ' ≠ ']

A message to close my mouth popped up. Don't speak about infinity symbol. It probably meant the regression. Then again, if I told him about even that, too much information about the system would be exposed.

“And me disappearing a while ago is related to the system manufacturers.”

“The system manufacturers?”

Yoohyun had an expression that was shocked. Finally his face was loosening a little.

“Somehow I came to help the system manufacturers. Even though I want to tell you in detail, I can’t. I’m not allowed to. Still, I wanted to tell you, so I asked them to send you a message. It’s the consonants in ‘system’. Please send it now.”

Yoohyun’s gaze went toward the air in front of him. It seemed like the message window had popped up. It was a hugely taken aback expression.

“So..... there really are people-like things that made it?”

“Turns out there are. Isn’t it weirder if it suddenly appeared naturally?”

“That’s true but.....”

“This is something I’m only telling you, with permission. It’s a secret to other people. You can’t ever tell anyone.”

For a moment, there were no words. Still, my brother's complexion became even brighter.

"Are hyung's skills also related to the system?"

"Not all of them. I said I couldn't tell you in detail. Still, they're really not normal skill states."

".....Yeah. No, but why hyung of all people? They're not making you do anything dangerous?"

"It's not dangerous. It's the same as what I'm already doing."

Since it was just gathering S-Ranks. Currently, you were the most dangerous, younger brother.

Suddenly I thought of Water Droplet's advice to be careful of high rank Awakened People. Goodwill could become violence; it was exactly that.

"If you have anything else you're curious about, ask me. Don't hold it inside again."

After a short silence, a wilting voice replied.

“.....I’m sorry. I complained that I couldn’t trust hyung’s words, but it was actually the opposite.”

“No. If it were me, I wouldn’t have been in my right mind with today’s matter either. And it was the truth that I hid various things. Peace, I’m sorry to you too. You were really alarmed, right? I didn’t think they would take me that suddenly.”

-Gareureung

Peace who rumbled while looking back and forth between me and Yoohyun, suddenly became smaller. No, he became younger. It wasn’t that he got smaller, but that it was just the appearance when he was young.

[2nd Rank Unicorn subspecies – Horned Flame Lion(Juvenile) Peace

Current stat rank C]

The status window also said ‘juvenile’ and he became C again.

“Peace, you...”

-Kkiang!

He scratched my leg with his front legs, asking to be held. Hey punk, could you have possibly.

“Did you grow to an adolescent but purposely stayed as a juvenile?”

-Gyareureureu

He had on an innocent expression that said ‘I do not know anything at all’. When I held him like he wanted, he wagged his tail.

“When did he get big?”

“A bit after hyung disappeared.”

Then it wasn’t that he grew after catching monsters. Was he really purposely not growing?
From just when?

Just in case, I opened Peace’s My Brat skill status window.

[Time required for adult transformation(71:22)]

71 hours?! But there was definitely over a hundred hours left? Even after staring at it for over 1 minute, the time didn't decrease. Then, normally it was the same as ever; was it possibly due to the training? Even after the skill's application ended, I played often with Peace.

I should check after going home.

"Is there some problem?"

"No. But why didn't Peace grow until now? Did he get a related skill?"

"I don't know about skills, but if he gets bigger, he wouldn't be able to be held by hyung. You said he likes being held."

Just because of that?

"Still, Peace, show that you're becoming an adult."

-Kkiang

If there really was a training effect, then he might finish growing before the skill standby time ended. I was already a little sad.

I petted Peace as I looked at my brother. As soon as our eyes met, he was embarrassed. Whew, okay. If you calculated it out, it was my fault. When I thought of how uneasy he was all this time, I felt sorry.

“I’ll tell you this ahead of time, but the person I trust the most in the world is you, Yoohyun. To the point that I would think there must be some reason even if you were a danger to my life. Even from now on, that won’t change.”

There was no reason for that to change, unless someone died instead of me and revived or regressed.

“So don’t be concerned or worried about it. You can interfere. You’re my brother. Of course, you can’t do something too excessive. If you’re excessive about it, I’ll get mad. The same for confining. You can’t.”

“.....Hyung.”

Yoohyun came towards me and hugged me. Peace, who was stuck between us, must have felt suffocated because he let out a small ‘kkiing’.

“If you need any help, tell me anytime. Don’t do too much.”

“Don’t worry. There’s no reason to do too much.”

I just had to do the task the system people gave me. I shouldn’t increase the work.

[1] lit. sth like ‘put [aside] the food that is past being done and was already even set on the table, and throwing away his life’.

[2] lit. ‘only rolled on top of my tongue’ but I think this is the general meaning?

[3] lit. ‘ghost-like’ which you use when sb is really proficient at sth, apparently, according to the krn dict, but which I’ve only ever heard my mom use when she thought sb realized/noticed sth that she didn’t expect them to catch or that should’ve been hard to catch.

[4] after thinking abt it, I realized I’ve been using ‘our’ more often than I would’ve thought, and that it actually doesn’t sound that weird in eng, so I’m changing this to the lit. tl of ‘Our Kid is This Amazing

Chapter 68: < Blue (1) >

< Blue (1) >

[Don’t worry. There’s n□ reason to do too much.]

[Let's just kill that and leave.]

[It's a bit...?]

[So you couldn't raise the level even a bit.]

[No! Peace!]

[What nonsense are you saying now. No.]

[Okay. Even if I secretly go out, I won't even say that. And there's no reason to go out for a long time anyways.][1]

Red eyes that didn't have whites quickly read down the text appearing on the window. At intervals in the meantime, other notification windows popped up.

[Awakened Person Nared Pasamuha 10 level skill conditions satisfied]

[I-25 dungeon first attack]

[I-3 dungeon special attack B-2 achievement]

‘Newcomer’ moved the ends of the fin divided into strands and checked Nared Pasamuha’s aptitude information, and at the same time, took care of the first attack and special attack rewards. The rewards didn’t have special details, so immediately after the acceptance, the system moved on its own. But the 10 level skill had to be directly picked among the ones fitting the aptitude and current state, and connected.

While doing so, Han Yoojin’s conversation window disappeared. He had left the dungeon.

After taking care of several other matters, Newcomer waved the long and wide fins and went out to the lounge.

On a white chair that seemed like a moon with the middle scooped out, ‘Water Droplet’, who had been the source of water for a past world, was smoothing down a broken deer antler.

The antler that seemed to be made from translucent crystal was letting out a faint light.

“I was nervous.”

Gathering his fins in front of him and sitting, Newcomer let out a sigh.

“Since we can only see a part of only Honey’s words, I cannot tell exactly what the matter is. The atmosphere is completely serious too. It is a relief that it seemed like it ended well this time, but isn’t Honey’s younger sibling definitely a little dangerous?”

At Newcomer’s words, Water Droplet wore a vague smile.

“There is no precedent for the Perfect Caregiver’s keyword effect, and that being applied overlapped, so it’s hard for even us to predict. Still, he has already offered his life and saved Honey once. I think that as long as he is pacified well, he would become the most reliable guardian.”

Even with Water Droplet’s words, Newcomer’s expression didn’t relax. Instead, the frown became deeper.

“I think something like a typical warrior would be more relieving. And an oracle is more convenient for the system, than a game. Though, of course, the thing that requires the least work is a world that has developed up to virtual reality.”

“If it gets to even virtual reality, isn’t that the precipice?”

“That’s right! That is why the demon king warrior story is the best! Playing a god is also fun. Next time, I want to be a chicken and beer god. That side normally has bland food. Fried, seasoned, soy sauce, green onion chicken, spicy chicken...”

Newcomer, who was reciting types of chicken in a row, looked at Water Droplet as if he had suddenly thought of something.

“But the blacksmith. Doesn’t he also have potential? Truthfully, I am uneasy about Honey and sorry to him too, but can’t we change the target?”

“It’s different than with Shalos-ssi. That ahjussi had already been working as a blacksmith for hundreds of years, but Yoo Myeongwoo hasn’t even made a hoe before. He’d probably grow quickly thanks to Shalos-ssi’s present, but it would probably take 30 years at minimum to make myth rank equipment? There’s not enough time.”

Water Droplet continued speaking, spinning the deer antler they were holding.

“If Honey happens to fail, we’ll steal the blacksmith away to the next world. Since all he needs is time.”

“What about Honey?”

“We would like to take him, but would Honey accept it? With that title.”

“Th...at’s, well. He would probably refuse. And if we forcefully take him out, then it would get too dangerous.....”

The ends of Newcomer's long fluttering ears drooped. It was then.

"I heard this team is a matter of time? Congrats, congrats!"

A woman who was like a translucent ghost suddenly appeared. The ghost smiled cheerfully as she stretched her neck toward Newcomer.

"But why is the youngest so tearful?"

"It is uncomfortable, the skill."

"I heard. It is pretty unusual. But he'd probably think it's actually a relief?"

"Is that so?"

"Of course! It's much better than not having potential. Besides, our youngest, if it's like this, it won't be long before you take off the label of newcomer?"

At those words, Newcomer slapped his fins.

“That is true! That is so! Ah, I will decorate Honey’s room. How should I decorate it? I heard that the thing that that world’s people like the most is Christmas! A large tree, reindeer, a red grandfather!”

“That’s right, that’s right. In our position, we should have fun, not be tearful. Should we have a toast ahead of time!”

A glass sloshing with clear alcohol appeared in the ghost’s hand. She lightly lifted the glass and smiled.

“To the imprisoned immoral people!”

“So if the skill is applied once, it’s possible to grow through training on normal days too, huh.”

[Time required for adult transformation(71:01)]

After energetically throwing around a ball for over thirty minutes, about twenty minutes time had decreased. The efficiency fell a lot. Still, even if I paid attention for just two to three hours a day, the growth that should take two months, would end in one month, give or take.

That was so, but.

‘Let’s not increase the work. Let’s not increase the work.’

Except for when it’s urgent, let’s say I don’t know. If this was known, I would be harassed by mental games and requests asking ‘please pay more attention to our kid’. And there would be a ‘token of good will’[2] stuck between the kids’ toys.

Still, did I have to tell Yoohyun? Since it would be bad if he lost control again, because I hid something.

“He wasn’t like this when he was young. As expected, Hunter work doesn’t seem to be good for your emotions. Peace, you can’t change, okay?”

-Kkiang!

“But even so, don’t just not grow at all.”

I didn’t know at all that he had already grown into an adolescent. Wait, did that mean the pen also didn’t actually have any use? It was made to withstand only up to C-Rank, so if he was B-Rank, he could break it and come out. Even so, he quietly stayed shut in.

“Our Peace, you really are good.”

-Gareureung

Now I could also worry less about him attacking Chirpie.

While we had already come to the training room, I played with Peace some more, and then went up. When I opened the door, I heard the TV. Did Myeongwoo return early for once?

But there was nobody in the living room. Other than Chirpie.

“...Chirpie?”

-Chirp!

Chirpie, who was sitting on the sofa with the remote next to it, turned to look at me. Uh, Chirpie couldn't have been the one who turned on the TV, right? And how did it get on the sofa? When I looked around, I saw the basket that I had left Chirpie in, upside down at the bottom of the sofa.

Could it have turned that over and used that as stairs? Was that possible?

“.....To think that our kid was actually a genius.”

On top of that, look at that, it was using the remote by pressing with its feet. Should I send it out on TV? Did animals have anything like gifted people discovery programs?

“Our Chirpie, even watching the TV by yourself. What were you watching? Was it fun?”

-Cheep cheep cheep! Cheep cheep!

It seemed like it was explaining something, but obviously I couldn't understand. Was there anything like monster language translation items somewhere?

“Right, right. You really are smart.”

I placed Peace on the sofa and took out a magic stone from my inventory.

“This is the D-Rank dungeon boss magic stone that Uncle Yoohyun got.”

As benefiting a high grade D-Rank dungeon, it was pretty big. If it was this much, it would be close to a normal C-Rank magic stone. So I had thought it would definitely like it.

-Chirp

Chirpie didn't show much of a reaction for once.

"...Chirpie? Could you be hurt anywhere?"

They said that one of the symptoms that appeared first when animals weren't well, was that they didn't eat their food. Could you take monsters to vets too?

"Are you really not going to eat-."

-Chirp!

Oh, it was eating. As if saying 'when was I unenthusiastic', the small beak fiercely grabbed the magic stone piece and swallowed it.

-Cheep cheep cheep!

Then it happily flapped and,

-Cheep!

With a bump, it slipped and fell down the sofa. Even with the basket next to it, it jumped around, trying to go straight up the sofa.

...Does it get a little stupider after eating magic stones?

The boat that had three baby monsters that Haeyeon had purchased arrived at Incheon Harbor. It was one highest rank and two high ranks.

Until the monsters were loaded onto the boat, they only had the value of simply extremely rare pets. And they were ones that had food costs that were too expensive compared to their body worth. Even the rich people who collected rare animals usually only bought middle to low rank monsters. It was because high ranks and higher were hard to manage unless there was a mid rank Hunter.

But now, the situation had completely changed. Especially highest rank baby monsters were aimed for by the giant guilds in the entire world, so even before the boat was moored, Haeyeon's Hunters were spread out at the pier. It seemed like all of them, except for the two teams in the middle of dungeon attacks, had come out.

"Shouldn't Haeyeon also increase the number of Hunters?"

I said, standing next to the dockside and staring at the ocean. There was a salty smell deeply mixed with the wind. It had been a while since I had seen the ocean outside of a dungeon.

There wasn't exactly any reason to come. My life was too difficult.

"It won't be long before Yerim will have to attack S-Rank dungeons, so then a new S-Rank team has to be organized."

And they couldn't stay a small number of elites forever. The number of dungeons to manage would gradually increase, so it couldn't be handled with the current number of people. They had to widely recruit, of course A-Rank, but also B-Ranks to even C-Ranks.

"After taking care of MKC, I'll slowly increase them."

Yoohyun, who was looking the same way as me, said.

"And Hunter Bak Yerim will make her own team on her own."

"On her own? The guild isn't going to set it up for her?"

"S-Rank teams are normally like that. S-Rank Hunters have to find their team members by themselves. I did, too. If the guild needlessly interferes, it becomes harder to make a proper team."

"It's not like A-Ranks who aren't affiliated are common, and it obviously won't be easy to steal any away from other teams or guilds. It seems like our Yerim will have quite a lot

difficulties.”

When I found A-Ranks, should I sneakily tell Yerim first? If they were combat aptitude A-Ranks, Yerim could take them directly into a dungeon and make them Awaken, without them waiting for the Awakening Center opening. For combat skills, it was easy to Awaken fitting their optimization.

“Right, hyung. Take this.”

Yoo Hyun took out a necklace from his inventory and held it out.

“What is that?”

As soon as I saw the shape and design of the small metal ornament at the end of the chain, I realized, but I pretended not to know. It was still an extremely rare item.

“It’s a translation item. Once the rearing facility opens soon, people will come looking for you from overseas too, so you’ll need it.”

“I heard you were blocking the people who were trying to contact me, but you’re even giving me something like this...”

I was touched. He really did change. It was praiseworthy, too. I should have tried to talk to

him earlier.

“Where did you hear that from?”

“The Seseong Guild Leader told me, more or less, before.”

Though I heard it more in detail from Riette.

“Thanks. I’ll use it well.”

At any rate, I was thinking that I had to find one.

“It’s been a while, hyung-nim!”

Just then, I heard a familiar voice. When I turned around, Breaker’s guild leader Moon Hyuna was striding over with long legs. The brightly smiling face seemed like a naughty boy’s.

“Did the kids arrive safely?”

“The boat has just moored now. Seeing how there has not been any particular contact, there

is probably nothing wrong.”

Yoohyun answered. Moon Hyuna glanced at Yoohyun and spun around to stand stuck close to my side.

“There wasn’t anything big in the meantime?”

“There was not.”

I just popped in and out of a few dungeons secretly, got a few new titles, killed a few people, and was almost confined by my younger brother. These few days were pretty eventful in their own way, actually. Still, it all ended well, so it was okay.

“If you bring in three at once, wouldn’t about one be left?”

“There are none left.”

Yoohyun said concisely.

“I didn’t ask the younger brother, though.”

“Hyung does not have the authority.”

“That’s cold. Still, isn’t the highest rank going to hyung-nim? That’s what was decided.”

Was it decided in the meantime? Moon Hyuna wrapped hers around my arm and stuck even closer. Even the weather was hot, so why don’t you stop sticking already.

“How’s this, hyung-nim. Sometimes lending it out. It’s a waste if highest rank monsters don’t go into a dungeon a few times. It’ll be good for us both if it gets experience and you let it go into a dungeon with me. Don’t you think?”

That was true. Truthfully, it was waste to keep it stuck to my side.

“That is true, but there is no need to send it to Breaker.”

“Ah, why? At any rate, Han Yoohyun and Bak Yerim and Sung Hyunjae, that guy, are all picky about attributes. But I’m not. It just has to be fast and tough.”

“Do only S-Rank Hunters use familiars? S-Rank attack team members also need familiars to quickly attack.”

It might be different if it was a long time later, but right now, it would be hard for there to be one per person for A-Ranks as well, though.

“And they can also be used, not as familiars, but substitutes for S-Rank Hunters.”

At my words, Moon Hyuna’s expression became sullen as if sulking.

“Don’t act picky and let me borrow it at least once. I’m dying of curiosity over how much of a difference there would be for an attack with a highest rank familiar’s rushing power added. At least let me check!”

It was common for high rank combat Hunters to obsess over increasing their own abilities, but was she curious enough to personally come here and cling?

“I will let you borrow it one or two times. Instead, it will not be free.”

“Of course! I’m not that shameless of a person. Above all, it’s our hyung-nim, so could I be careless? Whatever it is, just say.”

Just then, Yoohyun, who was taking a call, hung up the phone and spoke.

“They said they unloaded the monster cage.”

“Really?”

So I could finally see them, huh. I was curious what kind of kids they were.

[1] since these are all censored, I had to guess some parts, so the tl might be lacking, but I think I figured out most of them

[2] this is money or a small present given to teacher by parents. The dict says it's a token of good will but it's basically a bribe, and one that's specifically only given to teachers, which is why I put it in quotation marks (or whatever those are called... half quotation marks??)

Chapter 69: < Blue (2) >

< Blue (2) >

The number of monsters who had arrived were three, but there were only two cages. Inside the huge cages, I saw the curled up baby monsters.

[3rd Rank Unicorn type – White Shadow Unicorn(Juvenile)

Current stat rank E

Possible growth stat rank A

Optimized Initial Skills

Shadow Running(A) Achieve after growth

Powerful Ramming(A) Achieve after growth

Gallop Reinforcement(B) Achieve after growth

※Growth only possible in a particular region]

The two monsters stuck close together in one cage were none other than Shadow Unicorns. They were famous magic beasts that went around as a black and white pair. The Black Shadow Unicorn's status window was the same as the White's.

Growth only possible in a particular region. These guys also had quite a difficult adult growth condition. It was highly likely to be a region inside a dungeon, and it would take a lot of manpower and time to find that place and then stay there to grow them.

"I was wondering what they would be but they're Shadow Unicorns, huh! Putting aside that they're high rank, they're guys with really good rushing power! Haeyeon Guild Leader, can't I somehow get just one?[1]"

Moon Hyuna was wistful, saying that even if they were high rank, they had perfect abilities

as familiars. Then again, they even had a Galloping Reinforcement buff, so they might be better than a highest rank monster that was average to use for a grand charge. Just because a monster was highest rank, didn't mean its speed was fast.

In the cage in the other side, a small monster the size of a medium-sized dog was looking around with eyes filled with curiosity.

[2nd Rank Gryphon type – Gold Gryphon(Juvenile)

Current stat rank C

Possible growth stat rank A~S

Optimized Initial Skills

Ruler of Wind(S) Achieve after growth

Gold Arrow(A) Achieve after growth

Wind Resistance(A) Acquired

Sharp Cry(B) Achieve after growth

※Growth once over a certain amount of particular monsters are ingested]

Wasn't that 'particular monsters' probably magical creature[2] kinds? If my prediction was correct, the growth condition was easy, for a highest rank monster.

Though it would differ according to how much the certain amount was, and the ranks of the particular monsters.

The type was Gold Gryphon, but it had soft cream-colored fur, maybe because it was still a baby. There were fairly huge wings, compared to the small eagle head and the body, which was like a cat that was chubbier than a lion. Since it was wind attribute. There was an S-Rank Hunter that was affiliated to that type. Though they were a foreigner.

"Gryphons are good too, but rushing is more attractive than swooping."

Even while saying so, Moon Hyuna's two eyes shone with greed as she looked at the Gold Gryphon. Gryphon types were also strong monsters with outstanding abilities. Especially in aerial combat, they should have no match, except for dragons. Bird types had slightly faster speeds, but if they collided properly, they wouldn't win against the gryphon's durability.

"These are the owner's tokens."

The Haeyeon's A-Rank Hunter, who must have suffered for a long time buying up and guarding the monsters, took three tokens out of their inventory.

Yoohyun, who received them, directly handed them over to me.

"I'll leave it to you this time, too."

"Leave it to me."

The black and white unicorns were herbivores and on the gentle side, so there were no big worries, and the gryphon was a problem. Still, there was Peace, so it would be okay. When I grasped the tokens, the kids looked at me at the same time. The unicorns still looked a little frightened, but the gryphon's gaze was too bright for words. Those two eyes were a really pretty blue. They seemed like deep blue gems.

"Apparently, the unicorns are a male and female pair, and the gryphon is female."

Yoohyun said. So those guys' sexes were clear. Our Peace was still ambiguous. Chirpie was like that, too. Should I try taking Chirpie to a chicken sexer? Or someone like a bird specialist.

Creak

The gryphon cage's door was opened first. The baby gryphon that jumped out without any fear shook its body once.

-Kkyaaa!

The gryphon let out a cheerful-sounding sound.

-Kkyao kkyaa!

Maybe she was happy to come out of the cage, because she jumped around and then opened her wings wide and stretched. Once she loosened up her body, she tilted her head, looking back and forth between me and the unicorns. It was an attitude like she was wondering which side to bother first.

"You can't attack the unicorns."

She wouldn't understand, but I said it ahead of time. Gryphons, who were monsters from dungeons, also liked horses, like in our world's stories. As food. There was a difference in rank too, so you couldn't ever put the black and white unicorns together with the gryphon.

As expected, as the monsters increased, this issue became difficult.

-Kkyaa!

Whipping around her lion tail with a fluffy tip, the baby gryphon turned toward me. The blue eyes were still sparkling and the slightly opened beak seemed as if it was smiling. Even though she was suddenly kidnapped and dragged a long way across an ocean, it was a flawlessly sunny expression.

-Kkya! Kkyaa!

Along with the high tone sound that seemed like an excited young kid's cheer, she came bouncing over. As soon as I thought, 'The wings are huge, but maybe she can't fly yet,' the two milky white wings, which were lighter in color than the body, spread out widely.

Flutter

The gryphon who was lightly flying over became of height to my eyes. When she did, a message window popped up, like it did with Peace.

[Title 'Perfect Caregiver' has increased the effect of item 'Owner's Token']

The tamed target shows goodwill toward the Caregiver.]

"Kiddo, you're really cute."

The way she looked altogether was cute, but the mischievous-puppy-like expression was really lovable. I put the owner's token in my inventory and opened my two arms.

"Come here."

-Kkyao?

She tilted her head and spun once in a circle midair, and then dashed toward me.

"Be careful!"

"Ack!"

Yoohyun quickly snatched the gryphon's wings, but the hard beak powerfully brushed past my chest. A stat C-Rank had dashed forward with all her strength, so if she wasn't grabbed, my ribs might have broken.

"Here, drink."

Moon Hyuna opened a potion and held it out.

“It is not to the point of taking a mid rank potion.”

“I don’t do low ranks.”

Ah, yes. I understood, but it really was a waste. I was at the point of starting to come out an F-Rank’s expenditure, but it was hard. Still, it was free, so I just drank it.

“Looks like we shouldn’t let hyung directly take care of the gryphon.”

Yoohyun said, frowning slightly.

“Unlike Peace, she seems unused to controlling her strength, so you could get hurt bad if things go wrong.”

-Kkyaa!

The gryphon who was lifted with her wings grabbed, flailed her four legs in the air. Looking at that innocent appearance, it seemed like she had absolutely no intention of hurting me.

“It shouldn’t be that she can’t control her strength. She flew skillfully. It’s probably that she doesn’t know how weak I am.”

If she was unskilled in handling her own body, she wouldn't have been able to fly easily like just before. It wasn't simply flying, and her rotating and hovering flight was perfect.

"I don't have to say anything about her same type, and she would've only met mid rank and higher Hunters, so that's enough for her to not realize I'm weaker than her."

It wasn't like she had ill will, and she was tamed, so she just needed to be taught. The problem would probably only be that it was impossible through conversation.

If words didn't work, then you just had to use your body.

"Do you happen to have high rank potions as well?"

I asked, rolling up my right sleeve. If it was mid rank level, then it should be enough, but just in case. At my words, Yoohyun reacted first.

"Wait, hyung. Exactly what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to try to teach the kid gryphon how weak I am."

"That teaching is-."

“Just quietly stay there grabbing the kid. If you try to meddle, it’ll take longer.”

Maybe he had realized what method I was going to use, because Yoohyun’s complexion wasn’t good at all.

“There’s no need to go that far. And we can get other people to do it.”

“Why drag in a poor F-Rank who’s not even related to this? It’s a matter and a monster that I have to be in charge of.”

And it wouldn’t be easy to teach her using someone she didn’t have goodwill toward. I had the title’s effect, so it would finish quickly.

“Hyung-nim is right.”

Moon Hyuna said, taking out a high rank potion and shaking it.

“He’ll have to keep on taking care of various monsters from now on, so is it alright for him to already step back and pass it off to others? And, Haeyeon Guild Leader. I know well that you hold your hyung-nim dear, but hyung-nim is also a Hunter? A Hunter for whom being attacked by monsters is a normal everyday occurrence. He might be in a special position, but it’s the same as being deep in the Hunter community, so he can’t be trembling from

fear from just this. Like this, you'll try to completely wrap him up and hide him away."

He actually did try to do that, that guy. He had gotten a lot better now, though.

Maybe he was bothered by it or something, because that Yoohyun didn't protest anymore and closed his mouth. His expression was still bad, so I should pacify him or something separately, or he would probably go astray.

"You're a good girl, right, kiddo."

I stretched out my hand toward the gryphon who was staring at me with bright widened eyes. Even while being held up with her wings grabbed, she quickly smiled brightly and waved her tail. Her personality seemed really good.

-Kkya!

She stretched out her neck and,

Kwadeuk!

"Ack!"

Immediately chomped on my hand. I purposely yelled loudly and forcefully took my hand back and stepped back. I didn't meet the gryphon's eyes and looked away.

-Kkyao

A high rank potion was spread on the wound that was past having a piece of flesh ripped away to even the bones being exposed. It would've been enough with mid rank, though. Still, the effect was outstanding so the wound healed up in an instant as if washed away. Expensive things really were great.

"Are you okay?"

Moon Hyuna asked, putting the stopper on the potion. I nodded my head and turned back again.

The gryphon had wide eyes as if taken aback. Seeing the response, it seemed like she would quickly understand the situation.

"You can't bite. It hurts."

I soothed, and held out my hand again. The beak opened reflexively, and then closed again. Instead, the two front paws tightly grabbed my hand. The exposed claws dug into my flesh.

“Ouch!”

I shouted loudly and whirled away.

-Kkyoooo

This time, it was definitely a dispirited sound. I drew back and had my hand treated, and then waited for a moment. After looking away for about ten minutes, I turned back to the gryphon. The drooping guy snapped her head up.

-Kkyaa!

I showed a smile and went toward her again. When I held out my hand, this time, she didn't bite it or grab it with her paws. I gently petted her head and under her beak.

-Kkya kkya!

“Right, right. You're a good girl.”

I stroked the end of her beak, and then slowly put my fingers inside the open gap. She carefully bit and then a slightly excessive strength went into it.

“Ugh!”

When I showed that it hurt, she quickly opened the beak that was closed.

-Kkyaaoo

“Good. You can’t bite that hard. It hurts.”

When I touched the beak again, this time, she lightly bit down an appropriate amount as if grabbing my fingers.

“Now, let go.”

Yoohyun let go of the gryphon’s wings that he was holding. The baby gryphon flying up didn’t dash like before, and instead hesitated and then carefully placed one front paw on my chest. She really was smart.

I stretched my arms and hugged the gryphon.

-Kkyaa! Kkya!

“You can’t leap around. And put your claws in. That’s right. Yoohyun, her name... she probably doesn’t have one, right?”

It was the guy who didn’t give a name to Peace even after having him for one month. There was no reason he would’ve named the monsters coming over.

What should I call her? When I looked down at her, she went ‘kkyakky’ and stared right back. With the pretty clear blue eyes.

“Blue[3].”

-Kkyao!

How cute. She was soft and warm. The unicorns could be something like Black, White[4]. It was short, simple, and easy to understand. It had to be, to be convenient to call during combat.

“Take care of me from now on, Blue.”

-Kkyaaa!

I placed my cheek against the beak that came rubbing over, when,

Click!

I heard the sound of a phone camera. It was Moon Hyuna. She was smiling while holding her cell phone towards me.

“Please do not take photos however you want.”

“Ah, don’t be stingy. Personally, I want to pretend we’re close. Do you want to take one together?”

“No thank you. Please delete the photo instead.”

“Why are you like that to just me? What about your brother?”

What about Yoohyun. When I turned, I couldn’t see even the c of his cell phone[5]. Why was this woman dragging in someone else’s innocent younger brother?

“Please hand over your phone.”

“Do you want to trade with my photo?”

There was no need. After forcing her to delete the photo, this time I went toward the unicorn cage. The two foals moved their heads the same way, like twins, and looked up at me. The kids were quite cute. Though it was rare for kids to not be cute, even for baby animals.

-Kkyao! Kkyak!

Just then, Blue suddenly broke free from my arms and flew up. Then.

Bam!

-Hihing!

-Pureureu!

She drove her body into the cage the unicorns were in. Along with the loud noise, the cage shook and the unicorns were frightened and fled to a corner.

"Blue! No!"

-Kkya kkya!

Blue scratched the unicorn cage with her front paws. When the cage didn't budge a bit, she even turned to look at me as if looking for help. It looked like she felt like the unicorns would be a tasty lunch.

"They're not your food, punk."

When I forcefully pulled her off the cage, she was displeased, but obediently cuddled over. Seriously, I had to be careful with these three kids.

For safety, the unicorns were separately moved. It was because even after that commotion, the glint in Blue's eyes glaring at the foals was serious. It seemed like it would be better to manage the unicorns and the gryphon separately even afterwards. She wasn't even an adult, and it wouldn't be easy for the baby to suppress the instinct to go crazy about horsemeat.

"Is it really okay to take her home?"

Yoohyun said, looking at Blue clinging right in my arms. A while ago, I tried to pull her off the cage and she shrieked 'kkak kkak' a lot.

"I can't continue keeping her separate anyways. While I'm at it, I should let her and Peace familiarize with each other."

It would be good if the two of them got along well without a problem. As oppa and younger sister. Or unni and younger sister?

[1] she says sth more like 'can't just one be okay' but she's probably asking him to give her one, so I added the 'give me'

[2] this is that 마수마 word again. At this point I know 마수 = magic beast, and anyways I also confirmed the hanja and def on namu wiki, so I'm 100% sure. But I can't find 마수마 anywhere so I really don't know!

[3] eng word transliterated into krn, and yes, the name of the ch.

[4] both also said in eng transliterated into krn

[5] 'can't [verb like 'see' or 'find'] [1st letter of sth]' is a common expression. I don't think I need to explain what it means tho

Chapter 70: < Blue (3) >

< Blue (3) >

To prepare just in case, I was going to get the help of the Hunter in charge of security today, but Yoohyun said he had time left and followed. It was only after I replied to do so, without thinking much about it, that I remembered the matter of Myeongwoo.

'If it's this time, he would be in the forge.'

Suddenly popping out of midair was awkward, but it being caught that he wasn't at home was also awkward. And there was no way a stat S-Rank wouldn't notice whether a person was at home or not.

While I was at it, should I try arranging for those two to become friendlier? It would be better if Myeongwoo made a weapon for Yoohyun first. Especially something SS-Rank or higher.

"Do you remember Yoo Myeongwoo? My friend."

"He's not really your friend though, right? You said you knew each other since you were young, but it's a name I've never heard of before. And when I checked, where he lived was different too."

Yoohyun said, pressing the elevator button.

"When did you go so far as to check?"

"There's no reason to let an outsider in without a background check."

That was so, but usually, you didn't go so far as to find where they lived when they were

young.

“Still, he is my friend. It’s not like we spent only one to two days together.”

Did I have to confess to Myeongwoo that we didn’t actually know each other, before he gets the ability to check the truth? Something like, I mistook you for someone. It wasn’t like I was trying to extort him or something, and rather it was the opposite, so wouldn’t there not be much of a problem even if I said we didn’t used to be friends?

“Anyways, be nice to him.”

“Me, why?”

“I shouldn’t tell you in detail without the actual person’s permission, but he’s someone who will help you.”

And a lot, at that. It wasn’t to the point of being nice, but to the point of treating him reverently.

“.....What skill did that person get?”

“You sure are sharp.”

“There’s really no reason other than that. Since he was a normal person. You sent him to sharpen knives at the equipment management team almost everyday, but he stopped a few days ago, so he must’ve gotten it then. Then the probability of it being a special skill is high and... with the situation.....”

Yoo Hyun frowned slightly.

“.....Could it be?”

“Whatever you thought of, I guarantee that it’s above that.”

It was a production skill without a limit on rank. It was beyond even my expectations, while knowing the skill name.

“So, be nice. Myeongwoo isn’t going to go into a particular guild, either. He’s planning on going with me.”

“With hyung?”

“Yeah. I did tell him that being affiliated with a guild would be comfortable, but he wanted to be independent. Don’t think of pointlessly bothering him.”

I firmly laid it down before getting on the arrived elevator. But a reply didn't come back. When I turned to look toward my side, I saw a face that was intently locked in thought.

"You're not going to bother him, right?"

"Exactly what skill is it?"

"You're not going to reply?"

"...Okay."

Yoohyun nodded his head as if saying he had no choice. It made sense to avoid a definite answer as a guild leader. I did demand an answer, but he couldn't withstand it a little longer, so anyways, he was weak-hearted.

When we passed the hallway, we finally arrived in front of my house. Blue, who was held in my arms, was still well-behaved.

"I think it's impossible that they wouldn't fight at all; just interfere when it seems serious."

For Chirpie, the stat difference wasn't even a match, so we had to look after Peace unilaterally, but this time was different. They would have a similar amount of abilities once they were both grown, so it would be better to set the pecking order while they were still

young. Peace and Blue would keep on staying next to me, except for when they were in dungeon attacks, so setting it was even more necessary. It wouldn't be manageable if they happened to fight after becoming adults.

"Peace, dad is back."

When I went through the door and opened the inner door, Peace, who was waiting in front of it, looked up at me. No, not me, but at Blue. The red tail that would have been swaying if it was normal, was still.

"It might be sudden, but this is your younger sibling."

-Kkyao!

Blue shouted, as if replying, and looked down at Peace with eyes gleaming with curiosity. When I took off my shoes and went inside, Peace, who hadn't been moving as if frozen, scratched my leg with his front feet. It meant he was asking to be held.

"Wait. Blue, let's put you down."

I tried to put Blue down on the sofa. But she even pulled out her claws and grabbed my arm.

-Kkyaa! Kkyak!

“No. You have to let go.”

Right when Blue was being stubborn, Peace jumped up onto the sofa. Then he quickly bit the wing of Blue, who was clinging to me, and,

Whoosh

Threw her backwards. I felt like I had seen a similar scene before.

-Kkya kkyak!

Blue, who was thrown, flapped and straightened up. In the meantime, Peace cuddled into my arms.

-Keuheung

The bushy tail swished, and then golden eyes looked down at the baby gryphon. The expression was like he was saying this was his position.

-Kkyaoou?

-Keureureu

-Kkya! Kkyaa!

Blue, who had come down from the sofa, lowered her head and waved her raised butt. No matter how I looked at it, it was a position that was right before pouncing. Like this, it wouldn't be that my innocent back would break, right? Yoohyun was here, so he would block it.

-Kkyook!

With a strong yell, Blue rushed toward Peace. Then,

Puk!

-Kkyak!

Peace's front paw smacked the yellow beak. The baby gryphon who had spun in the air, dropped to the sofa.

-Kkyao kkyoo

Blue covered her beak and moaned. It didn't seem like she was hit that hard though.

-Kkyooo kkyoo

"Blue, are you okay?"

-Kkyao!

As soon as she heard my voice, she quickly straightened up as if she was never distressed. She sure was valiant, our Blue. Still, it might have hurt quite a bit, because she couldn't lunge at Peace again.

"Peace, she's a dongsaeng younger than you, so treat her more indulgently."

-Kkiang?

Peace tilted his head, as if saying he didn't get what I was saying. It was an innocent tilt, but ... no matter how I looked at it, it seemed like he was pretending like he didn't understand.

"Here, you go down too."

-Kkeueueung

“Go and say hi to your younger sibling.”

Peace was displeased, but went down onto the sofa. I left them two and stepped back. Blue, who seemed a little tense, soon ran in place rambunctiously.

-Kkya kkya! Kkyaaa!

Peace stared quietly at the frivolously leaping Blue, and then raised one front paw. At the same time, Blue froze completely.

-Kkyooo

-Keureureung kyang!

At the short and sharp bark, Blue stuck her butt down on the sofa and quietly sat. The two of them went ‘kkyang kkyang keung keung’ at each other, and then Peace firmly pressed his front paw down on Blue’s beak. Then he turned his head and looked at me. It was a gaze that seemed like he was checking if this was okay.

It ended smoothly and well without any bloodshed. As expected of our Peace. He was reliable.

“Good job! You sure are good.”

-Kkiang!

I held Peace, who became proud and ran over. Blue, who followed over, looked up at Peace in my arms once, and then collapsed at my feet. The slightly dispirited one was sad, but Peace was the priority.

“If it’s like this, there won’t be anything to worry about from now on as well. Isn’t our Peace smart?”

Pleased, I turned to look at Yoohyun and spoke. Now only Chirpie had to join in safely, but I didn’t know if it would go well.

Just when I was about to go to my room to bring Chirpie, Yoo Myeongwoo walked out from around the kitchen. Maybe thanks to the stats rising, or because of the heavy labor, his body became better and his height grew a little, so it seemed like he had become a different person from the one I had first met.

Above all, his skin color changed. That elemental guy said that it was safe for the contractor, but why was he slowly being baked?

“You came out early today?”

“You said you were bringing over new monsters. I came out just in case.”

After saying so, he looked at Yoohyun, not Blue. The system people said that high rank Awakened People liked people with low stats and high special skills, so try conversing nicely, Yoohyun.

“It has been a while since we met.”

That little brother did smile. Though it was clearly business-like.

“Wasn’t there no particular reason for us to meet, during this time?”

Myeongwoo’s reply was colder than I would’ve thought. Though it would be weirder to have good feelings toward Yoohyun. When we went to the dungeon, he was treated like he wasn’t there, and when I was kidnapped, he was just shut up at home.

Should I have told Yoohyun to be nice earlier?

“Is that the new kid?”

“Yeah. Gold Gryphon, Blue. The other two are unicorns, so we left them in the training room. The pen at home is narrow, but you also can’t put gryphons and horses together.”

“Is it okay with Peace?”

“Our Peace suppressed her[1]. The two of them don’t really have an issue, but I’m worried about Chirpie.”

It was stat F and also small, so if it was accidentally hit, it could suffer a fatal injury. At my words, Myeongwoo took out a necklace and bracelet that was made of leather and metal.

“Here, try these.”

When I took the things held out, a simple explanation window popped up.

[Safe Rearing Necklace – B-Rank

The one wearing the necklace can’t attack the one wearing the bracelet.]

“It can block an attack from up to a stat C-Rank level. Originally, I made it for you to use, but the bracelet’s size automatically adjusts, so you can put it on Chirpie too.”

“You can make something like this too? You’re really impressive.”

Wow, so he could make equipment with special effects too. He said he could produce anything as long as it had metal, but I was surprised. It was too omnipotent. It was a scam.

“It’s not much.”

Myeongwoo said contently at my admiration. But why was he starting at Yoohyun, instead of looking at me?

“To think it is special item production, it is definitely impressive.”

“It is just the start now. If it is a simple item, I can make up to A-Rank, so even S-Ranks are not far now.”

“As a guild leader, it is something that can only be tempting.”

“Even so, compared to our Yoojin, I have far to go.”

“My hyung’s skills are indeed surprising in various ways.”

I mean, why was I coming up here. Both of them were smiling, but to say that the atmosphere was good was, hm... I should bring Chirpie over.

-Chirp!

-Kkyaa!

Chirpie, who had the shrunken bracelet on its ankle like the rings that birds had, was walking. Behind it, Blue, who was wearing the necklace, stuck close like a puppy that had seen a rolling ball, and waved her front paws.

Pong!

She pressed her paws down really strongly to try to grab Chirpie, but she was blocked by a bubble-like film. The attack didn’t go through, but still, it must have been fun, because she kept on banging on Chirpie.

-Kkyaak! Kkya!

-Chirp chirp

It was cute. I took out my phone and was going to take a video, but just took a photo instead. It was because those two guys were still talking behind me.

“Of course, Yoojin offered first. Coming all the way to here was also thanks to Yoojin.”

.....Did I have to find magic creature meat for Blue? It might be of help to her growth, so doing so would be good. Under which guild's management was a dungeon that had magic creatures, again?

“Hyung does have that kind of side. Even speaking of the matter a while ago, ah, you must not have heard it yet.”

“It is alright. Being unable to be involved in Yoojin's affairs and being left out, is because my abilities are lacking. Of course, it will not be far before there would be no reason for that. At any rate, we will be leaving Haeyeon Guild together. You will probably be a little sad when Yoojin leaves.”

“Before the guild and Hunters, we are family, so it does not matter.”

Why did they keep on mentioning me behind my back? On top of that, it felt like there were thorns secretly stuck in their words. Like that, far from becoming friendly, they would get more distant.

“Both of you must have a lot of things to do, so shouldn’t you start to go?”

If you were going to be like this, then leave. After sending both of those guys away, I took care of the kids’ food. Thankfully, Blue also ate any monster’s meat well. I had to feed the unicorns and tell them the keyword, so it looked like I had to keep on going up and down for a long time.

‘When the rearing facility is finished, it should get easier.’

It was the floor right below, and there was also a portal, so it would be easy to come and go. Since I was going to actually leave the dorm room, I was a little sorry. Here was quite nice too.

‘Should I just ask if I can have this place?’

Just in case, I could need to use it.

‘Suk Hayan’s meeting friends are said to enter the country soon. After those people come and the data is organized a bit more, I should call the Dokkaebi over and ask them to go to China this time.’

I had also found the thirteenth optimized special skill B-Rank or higher person. I was also

contacting Riette through social media, and had asked her to send her younger brother over once the rearing facility opened.

'I should start to contact Do Hamin, too. There's nothing else besides that, right?'

It seemed like there wasn't exactly anything, but it also seemed like I had forgotten something. Who else was there? I didn't know. If it was important, I would think of it later at least.

"Blue! No!"

I snatched up the baby gryphon who had her head stuck in an ice cream container. The black and white spotted beak cheerfully went 'kkyak kkyak'.

"And when did you learn how to open the fridge door!"

-Kkyaaa!

"Peace and Chirpie don't even touch their feet to people food, so why are you like this! You're a monster – what are you going to do if you get sick!"

-Kkyao kkyaa?

Shit, even if I reprimanded her, only my throat hurt. Only one day had passed, but Blue, this punk, was really, seriously... Peace seizing a few pieces of furniture was on a cute level.

While washing her on the first evening, she broke the sink and the showerhead, shred about thirty towels into shreds, and broke the lights while leaping around having fun. During dinner, she swooped down on the table and tried to eat all the food that she had swept with her wings down onto the floor, and while struggling, the cream-colored fur had been stained with all sorts of food, so she had to be washed again.

Of course, she wasn't well-behaved while washing. Unlike Peace, she liked water, but it was more of a commotion because she liked it.

What was extremely fortunate was that as soon as it turned exactly nine in the evening, she fell asleep. The night was peaceful. And exactly at nine in the morning, she woke up and wailed loudly to be let out of the pen.

As if she had completely forgotten yesterday, she lunged at Peace and was blocked again, chased after Chirpie and broke a table, and after scratching up the sofa, she left long claw and beak marks on the walls and ceiling...

While I had taken my eyes off her for a moment, she had emptied the freezer.

"Stay still, so I can clean your beak. If you keep on moving, it'll get on your fur."

-Kkyaa!

She rolled and showed her belly and wagged her tail. Both the large blue eyes and the opened beak were brightly smiling. The appearance of her tapping my hand with her front paws as if saying 'let's play' was still cute. Whew, okay, I did raise the kids easily until now.

"Peace, you were really well-mannered."

I said, petting Peace, who had come to stick to my side. Besides breaking some furniture, there wasn't much trouble. Chirpie was weak, so it was well-behaved. And our Yoohyun was really good kid.

"I should leave Blue to a different Hunter before I go."

If I left her in the pen alone, I was afraid she would yell the whole day. Even if the dorms were well sound-proofed, there was a limit.

I cursorily cleaned up and went out only taking Blue. I had an appointment with the Hunter Association in regards to the Awakening Centers around lunch. It would be good if the talk went well.

[1] no direct object, but I'm assuming yj means blue instead of peace's feelings or w/e

Chapter 71: < Blacksmith's Debut (1) >

< Blacksmith's Debut (1) >

"Ahjussi, ahjussi, ahjussi!!"

As soon as I turned in the hallway, I met Yerim, who had just come out of the elevator. I had heard that she was going to a B-Rank dungeon attack, but it seemed like she had already finished. She must've washed at the maintenance room and came up, because she was wearing a short sleeves and shorts tracksuit and her hair was damp.

"So that's the new monster you brought over!"

"Yeah, this is the Gold Gryphon, Blue."

"Cute! Can I trying hugging it?"

Peace hated it, but wouldn't Blue be okay? And she was already sending a gaze filled with curiosity toward Yerim.

-Kkyaa!

When I held her out from where I was holding her in my arms, she flapped over to Yerim on her own. Yerim spread her arms open wide and pulled Blue over into a hug.

“S~o cute! And the fur is soft too! There’s a slight ice cream smell?”

Since it was right after eating through a huge container.

-Kkyao kkyo!

“Peace had golden beans[1] but this one has pink beans? Look at the bottoms of the paws, I want to bite them! Blue~.”

Maybe she had understood she was getting affection, because Blue’s tail whirled like a fan. She was an eagle plus lion, but this guy was like a puppy who liked socializing.

“Truthfully, ahjussi’s naming sense is like an ahjussi’s.”

“.....What?”

“Putting aside Peace, what’s Chirpie and Blue? I head the unicorns were White and Black. They aren’t countryside dogs, so to think that it’s Whitey and Blackie[2] – it’s completely like

an ahjussi.”

“I-it’s intuitive, and they’re short and good, aren’t they?”

They were easy to understand and convenient things were the best... was thinking that way like an ahjussi? I mean, even considering before the regression, I was only thirty.

“But where are you going? To the training room?”

“To meet Hunter Association people.”

“Ah, then I’ll go with you! These days you only go with Guild Leader! The one who’s supposed to protect ahjussi is me.”

“You were busy going into dungeons.”

And from now on, she would get even busier. Since she had to make her own S-Rank team. As expected, I should help out a bit.

I entrusted Blue to the Hunter on duty today, and then went down. When I met Yoohyun, I thought that this guy wasn’t doing any work at all compared to Yerim. At this guy’s level, going with me was like going on an outing, not going to an attack.

“Haven’t you not gone into a dungeon at all lately? You don’t have to manage S-Rank dungeons?”

If it was a low grade S-Rank dungeon that you had perfect attack information for, it was possible to attack with just an A-Rank team, but besides that, an S-Rank Hunter was necessary. The number of S-Rank dungeons that Haeyeon was managing was probably still small, but it wasn’t to the extent of being able to play around.

“I do have to go within ten days.”

Yoohyun said, looking at me with worried eyes.

“Once I start attacking an S-Rank dungeon, I have to be gone for at least a week, so I was putting it off as much as possible. Me being... distant from hyung was also largely due to the S-Rank dungeon attack time. Since, once I go into a dungeon, I obviously can’t pay attention.”

The length of an S-Rank dungeon attack was at minimum a week, in cases where there was attack information. If it was a first attack, it could get to over one month. If the characteristics match was bad, it could take fifteen days even if there was enough information.

Having to leave for that long of a time periodically was one of the biggest weak points of a

guild that had an S-Rank Hunter as a guild leader. Since, not only the guild leader, but even the elite high rank Hunters had to leave their places empty. On top of that, contact wasn't possible, and you couldn't come out in the middle. Though later, if it was a giant guild, they had two or more S-Rank Hunters by default, so that weak point disappeared.

"Now there is me, so why don't you quickly go, Yoohyun oppa."

Yerim said, clinging onto my arm.

"I will take good care of ahjussi. All this time, I have diligently gone into dungeons, so I can take a vacation for around ten days and stick close to him. While we are at it, do you want to look my skills, and do you want to go into a dungeon together? Or how about a escape room cafe? I have always wanted to go, but I couldn't because it was expensive."

An escape room cafe. I haven't been to one either.

"Yoohyun, have you ever gone?"

"...What is that?"

.....Gosh, was that something a twenty-year-old should say? I felt like I could cry for him. Wasn't it the height of when he should be playing around, well-informed about the trends?

“You come too.”

“Ah, I was going to go with just ahjussi!”

“That guy said he hasn’t ever been either.”

“.....Okay. Since we’re not going to go just once. Then, since we’re going out anyways, should we go today?”

“If there’s nothing big, then let’s do that.”

I nodded my head lightly and got into the car.

The place we arrived at after driving fast for a long time, wasn’t the Hunter Association, but the Awakening Center that still wasn’t open yet. Unlike the Association building, it was located in the outskirts of Seoul and would carry out the function of the Association in an emergency.

That building next to the round dome-shaped Awakening Center was the same as Hunter Association No. 2. Specifically, the Awakening Center was stuck in belatedly. It was still thought of as just a new Hunter Association building by the public.

“I will go look for a cafe with good reviews!”

Yerim said, waving her arm to send us off.

When I looked at the new smooth exposed building, I felt a little unsettled inside. It was place I didn't have good memories of. It was the opposite. The steps that hadn't been stepped on much, were glossy. There was nothing in the surroundings. Not the fluttering banners, nor the gathered journalists.

It was quiet.

“What are you doing not going in?”

When I stopped and stood, Yoohyun turned to look at me suspiciously.

“I was just looking around.”

I replied like it was nothing and walked on. It was place I didn't want to come to again, but it didn't feel that bad. It could've been thanks to it being disappeared matters, and it could've been because of the Fear Resistance.

“Anyways, I told you to be nice to Myeongwoo, but why did you go and pick a fight?”

I asked, going up the stairs. What were you going to do if he didn't make you a weapon because of that?

"It wasn't a fight; I was checking what he thought of hyung. Since there's something hyung deceived him about. Just in case, if he seemed like he would resent hyung for that, I can't just let it go."

"You replied well when I told you not to bother him."

"It's dangerous because the skill is so good."

"Myeongwoo isn't a guy who would do something like that, and I'm going to confess it to him first."

"If you happen to fall out, definitely tell me. Don't hide it."

".....Ok."

Though I thought that he wouldn't be hostile even if it was possible for us to become distant. Still, in the unlikely case we fell out, like Yoohyun said, he was a dangerous opponent.

It would probably be okay... but should I have been better to him?

We opened the door and went inside. Inside the building was also completely empty. The long desk still had plastic covering it. I wondered if they needed to call us over to here if it was like this. Why didn't they just call us over to the close-by main Association building? Except for the guide standing in front of the entrance to the hallway a bit away, there wasn't anybody. We joined him and went along the hallway.

"This is the center of the Awakening Center, the Awakening Room."

When we passed the long hallway, the guide spoke, stopping at the round lobby. Besides the entrance we came through, there were five doors in all directions. At that time, it looked cramped, but it was quite wide, seeing it now when it was completely empty.

Inside the Awakening Room was still incomplete. We went around, looking around, and then went toward the place where the Hunter Association Head and other high up people were waiting.

"The A-Rank, B-Rank Hunters whom Hunter Han Yoojin has sent, have safely Awakened."

The vice-head, who looked a little younger than the Association Head, said. Two Hunters' profile data was placed in front of me.

While I was looking for special skill holders, I sent the A-Rank, B-Rank combat aptitude

Unawakened People I found additionally, to the Association. It was to prove my skill and get the Awakening Center related cooperation.

Looking at the data, the A-Rank had gotten two of the three optimized skills, and the B-Rank had gotten all three. As expected, it was relatively easy for combat aptitudes to optimally Awaken.

“As you can see, five of the six skills you have told us of ahead of time, also safely appeared. As you have advised, we created situations that fit the abilities they were expected to have according to their skill names. One of Hunter Kang Donghoon’s B-Rank skills is regretful, but Hunter Han Yoojin’s Unawakened People status window checking skill’s ability was certainly authentic.”

“Then, I suppose I can expect an affirmative answer.”

Since I tossed you high rank Hunters, pay the price.

“If Hunter Han Yoojin safely Awakens special skills as well, even if we try not to, we can’t help but cooperate, right?”

This time, the Association Head spoke.

“No, it’s even welcome for a system to be made so that visitation to the Awakening Center can only be possible after receiving status window verification from Hunter Han Yoojin. What do you think of making something like an Unawakened Person aptitude checking center?”

“...I think that is a little excessive.”

Were you thinking of working me to the bone?

“First of all, my ability cannot handle a large number. The skill rank is high, but my stat rank is low. In that situation, if you place a restriction saying that people have to receive my confirmation first, I will get the most criticism... that couldn’t possibly be your goal.”

“Hahaha, would that be so?”

The Association Head waved his hands, but I didn’t trust him at all. I needed to have choices and it needed to be a private establishment, for me to receive less criticism even if I took in only one to two hundred per day.

“It’s because people who will hastily Awaken wrong are a waste.”

“It is one’s own choice, so there is no choice but for it to be this way. It is not possible to take care of all people one by one.”

If it was this much, I did as much as I could.

Besides trying to uselessly push more work onto me, the Association was cooperative. At the escape room cafe, I felt like I said to not break it about a hundred times. Was seeing Yerim and Blue superimposed a mistake of my eyes? Still, Yerim at least understood my words.

“Ahjussi, let’s come back together again! The two of us!”

Don’t make me laugh.

We returned to Haeyeon, and I went to the unicorns in the training room before going up to the dorm floor. Yerim said she wanted to see, so she trailed after me.

“Whitey, Blackie[3], hi~. Which one is the girl?”

“The black one.”

“So this one, how pretty. Come here.”

Yerim, towards Blackie, no it was Black[4]. Anyways, she held her hand out toward the black baby unicorn. The unicorn raised her ears up straight, and then bit the held out hand.

“Ahaha, that tickles Blackie~.”

“You have to tell her not to bite. Or else it’ll become a habit. It might tickle for you, but an Unawakened Person’s fingers will get cut off.”

“Oh. No! Blackie!”

-Puheung!

At Yerim’s light tap against her head, Blackie was startled and drew back. She searched the surroundings and then scuttled behind me, hiding. The white guy followed too.

“Kids! Where are you hiding? That ahjussi is weaker than my little finger!”

Little finger was too much. Though it was true I was weak.

After taking care of the unicorns’ food, I also took care of Blue. The Hunter I left that guy with said, ‘It seems you have many hardships,’ with eyes filled with sympathy. At that, it was a relief that there were no worries about money; if I had a poor household, I would have cried.

“Peace, Chirpie. How were you?”

-Kkiang!

-Chirp!

When Peace barked with a solemn posture, Blue flapped out of my arms. Our Blue, so it wasn't like there wasn't any learning effect.

I went to give Yerim the side dishes she asked for, took care of the kids, and even ate dinner, but for some reason, Myeongwoo didn't appear. Even when Blue and Chirpie were sleeping and Peace was starting to nod off, I still didn't hear any news.

'And I can't contact him either.'

Maybe because it was a subspace, even cell phones didn't have service in the Gold Forge, like when going into a dungeon. Unless Myeongwoo came out first, there was no way to contact him.

He was actually in the Forge, right? There were times when he did stay up during the night, but he came out every meal time to eat. Didn't you have to eat properly if you were doing work that required strength? Why wasn't he coming out?

I slept fitfully from worry, and then it was morning. Just when I took out Blue, who cried right on time like a rooster, and was wondering if I had to find a way to contact the subspace, finally Myeongwoo appeared.

“Hey! If you’re going to stay in the Forge for this long, then you should at least say something! I was worrying that something happened inside of there!”

“Sorry.”

The mouth was saying sorry, but the face was widely smiling. Maybe because he had stayed up the night, it was dark underneath his eyes, but the expression at least was bright. Enough to be able to see right away that something good had happened.

“I couldn’t stop myself in the middle.”

Saying that, Myeongwoo took something out from his inventory. It was a long spear that seemed about 2 meters in length. With a bluish chill lingering from the blade to the handle, it wasn’t a normal object.

“Is that possibly.”

“Here.”

When I took the spear that was held out, a simple item explanation window popped up,

[Parmini's Ice Wood[5] Spear – S-Rank

A spear made by a skilled craftsman using an old Ice Tree branch. It carries a powerful chill.]

It was an S-Rank weapon.

It was a ratio increase, so it didn't raise my stats much, but a new skill appeared.

[Ice Attribute Reinforcement(S)]

Ice attribute reinforcement. That was also S-Rank. The one that came up when I used My Brat skill focused on Yerim was an A-Rank ice attribute reinforcement. To think it was an S-Rank attribute reinforcement.

.....Would our Yerim have put away a lot of savings?

“So you finally made even an S-Rank weapon!”

When I sent him a gaze that was full of admiration, Myeonwoo shrugged his shoulders.

“Thankfully, I succeeded on my first attempt. Though I had to stay up the whole night. It’ll get a little easier starting from the second one.”

“I didn’t know you would grow this fast. Like this, wouldn’t you immediately make an SS-Rank weapon, too?”

“That should be a little difficult. Apparently Ismual can only help with up to S-Rank weapons. Still, there’s one thing that I’m preparing.”

As expected, SS-Rank equipment were difficult. Still, how far did he come? It was really impressive.

“Now there’s nothing more to delay. We should get your name known, too.”

Originally, I suggested to debut as a blacksmith Hunter once he made an A-Rank weapon, but Myeongwoo had refused. Saying that he would put himself forward after he had made an S-Rank.

“Okay. Now I can confidently put myself forward.”

Myeongwoo nodded his head, smiling. I smiled back, and then remembered something I had put off.

I should voluntarily tell him before it was too late.

“Myeongwoo. There’s something I need to say.”

“What is it?”

“Truthfully, we didn’t know each other originally. It seems like I made a mistake.”

I confessed, adding a justification.

“Really?”

Myeongwoo answered. And that was it. No, wait. Why was the reaction like this?

[1] she says ‘jelly’ as in the eng word transliterated, which is the krn/konglish slang term, but in eng, ppl call the bottom of cats’ feet ‘toe beans’ so...

[2] for the unicorns’ names, she used the eng words transliterated, as named so by yj, but here she uses the krn words, which are used to call a white animal, and to cutely call a black dog, respectively. The ‘blackie’ used here is a slightly diff pronounced word than what yj named the salamander (rip blackie) but they’re fundamentally the same words, with the

exact same meanings.

[3] she says the two colors in krn and I added the '-ie' bc it's weird not to for names in eng. Unlike before in footnote [2], she doesn't use the words that are used to describe a white/black animal, but the colors themselves, though they can be used to refer to things that are white/black as well

[4] 'black' is the eng word transliterated, as yj originally named these the eng words

[5] the word used here can mean either tree or wood, so the same word is used here and in the explanation, but I changed the tl according to what sounded more right in eng

Chapter 72: < Blacksmith's Debut (2) >

< Blacksmith's Debut (2) >

"Um, I wasn't trying to deceive you. It turned out that we hadn't met before meeting at the Hunter Association. It became the same as me lying, but it wasn't on purpose."

I said incoherently, fiddling with the spear. I had thought that it would go over sufficiently if I said it was a mistake, but this much of a non-reaction was outside of my expectations. Shouldn't he be a little surprised at least?

“Even if you had deceived me, it doesn’t matter.”

“...Huh?”

“Yoojin, if you had lied, then I would reply ‘thank you for deceiving me’.”

Myeongwoo said, smiling. I mean, to the point of being thankful...?

“Why are you so taken aback? Here, look at me. SS-Rank production skill holder, Yoo Myeongwoo.”

That guy continued, spreading his arms wide and showing himself.

“Han Yoojin, you made this. The one who took a dime-a-dozen F-Rank Hunter and changed him this much, is exactly you.”

.....It wasn’t exactly wrong. But still, to just take it like that made my conscience prick.

“It’s true that I helped you, but getting the SS-Rank skill was your effort and talent.”

“So what if there’s a gem inside gravel. It was rolling around and right about to fall into a mire.”

“Even so.”

“Don’t be so adverse to it. I’ll get sad. Whatever anyone says, it’s true that the fact that I can be here like this, is thanks to you. Talent or effort or whatever, if the conditions aren’t right, they’re no use. Aren’t I living proof of that?”

Saying so, Myeongwoo patted my shoulder. But that strength was stronger than expected.

“Ah, that hur-.”

-Keureureu

I stumbled and grabbed my shoulder, when I suddenly heard a sharp noise. When I hurriedly looked around, Peace was baring his teeth. Blue also had her wings half spread. On top of that, even including Chirpie, all three of them were staring straight at Myeongwoo.

I had a hunch that a big issue would occur if I just left it alone.

“No, no it doesn’t hurt! It’s just a joke, a joke. Peace, put your canines back, and Blue, fold your wings, and Chirpie, what would you even do. Anyways, everyone calm down.”

Especially Peace, it wasn't that you've only known Myeongwoo for a day or two; you're baring your teeth with just something like this?

"Myeongwoo is my friend, a friend."

Thankfully, the kids soon went back to normal. I sighed and turned to look at Myeongwoo.

"Sorry. The kids must've made a mistake."

"No, it's because I couldn't adjust my strength properly."

"It's probably like that because you're just pounding away on steel all day. Rest every once in a while."

"Rather than that, it's because my stats went up."

".....What?"

Wait, the stats went up again? Was only Myeongwoo's, this guy's, system different – why did it go up again? Myeongwoo gestured with his chin to the spear I was holding.

"Apparently it was a reward for making my first S-Rank item, and they went up. They went

up for the A-Rank too, but it wasn't hard to control my strength at that time. This time, it went up quite a lot, so it feels like I haven't adjusted to it yet."

Were there rewards like that? I didn't know if it was the system he already had, or the care of the sunbae-nim, but it was a scam.

"Let's calculate your stats."

I added and then divided the stats that Myeongwoo called out. The average was.....

".....It's C-Rank."

Did he go up to D-Rank when he made an A-Rank item? If it was like this, wouldn't he become B-Rank when he makes an SS-Rank, and then an A-Rank when he makes an SSS-Rank, and then an S-Rank when he makes an L-Rank?

It looked like Myeongwoo really was the main character, and I was something like a supporting character. It seemed like he would go around using the equipment he himself made.

'Do I also have anything like my stats rising?'

Not something I hated even when given, like getting stronger for a week by grinding up other's lives and my mental state.

"Like this, wouldn't you start as an F-Rank and become an S-Rank?"

"Would that even happen – I'd like it to, but I don't know."

Myeongwoo held up his palms. When we had first met, this guy was wiltingly pale. It wouldn't have been different for his hands. They would have been lifeless hands that would've had only pen calluses at the most.

But now, they had become firm.

I saw, of course calluses, but the obviously thicker fingers and even scars that hadn't been treated yet. Both the color and shape were at least like those of a craftsman who had worked with steel for over a year.

"Who could've known that I would become like this. So an F-Rank could probably become an S-Rank. You'd never know."

I was thinking, 'Myeongwoo, you had talent in the first place,' when the system administrators' words came to mind. That it wasn't impossible for a normal person to grow into the world's strongest if they didn't have the system's restriction.

They said the system was scheduled to disappear in around 10 years. Once that happened, even if it wasn't an exceptional case like Myeongwoo, there could be people becoming A-Rank, S-Ranks even without particular talents.

"That's right, who knows."

It was right that nobody knew. Even speaking of me, did I know it would become like this after regressing?

"Now let's show other people this matter that nobody knew of."

I took out my cell phone and opened the abundant contacts. While scrolling down, a smile automatically appeared on my lips.

The Hunter Association Head received my call, and raised a fuss, saying he couldn't believe it and then telling us to come over directly right away. It was a bigger reaction than with my case.

It was enough to be so. The Hunter Association's main source of income was the market and the production and sales of various items, including potions. Even if they were directly made items, they were curse related, so it wasn't related to Myeongwoo, who mainly made equipment. It was the same for potions.

But the Hunter market was different.

The S-Rank and higher equipment's auction commission fee was probably substantial, but besides that, a regular supply being possible was the biggest advantage. Even with high rank Hunters from the entire world visiting and having his name known, his worth would be extremely outstanding.

Of course, you couldn't know if it would go the way the Association Head wanted.

And not much time passed, before calls and texts started to come to my cell phone. In the meantime, who knows how they found out, but even Myeongwoo's phone kept on vibrating.

"If it's that number, it's the Breaker Guild Leader."

I said, after checking the number when Myeongwoo brought his phone over, saying that calls kept on coming.

"Guild leader?"

"Yeah. It must've been relayed that the weapon that you made was a spear. She's an S-Rank Hunter who uses a giant spear."

The Ice Wood Spear wasn't for rushing use. It really was perfect for Yerim. The Mana stat

increase ratio was also high.

“If it seems like it’ll be annoying, change your number while you’re at it. Even if you don’t change your number, change your phone.”

It was a phone that seemed like it was at least 3 years old.

“Only the Association and Guilds might be contacting you now, but after going on air, your phone would probably ring off the hook with everybody and their mother[1] calling?”

Myeongwoo had an expression that said he didn’t feel a sense of reality yet. Though that probably wouldn’t last.

“Ahjussi! And our Myeongwoo oppa!”

When I opened the make-up room door, Yerim, who was already getting taken care of, spread her arms out wide and shouted. Myeongwoo couldn’t even reply to that shout, and was pulled by the hand by people. All the clothes he had been wearing had become small, so his appearance was no joke, and was in a state where things had to be altered from the top of his head to his feet.

After over an hour, while Yerim and I were chatting, Myeongwoo appeared, acting awkward.

“Oh, you are a totally different person. Don’t you think so?”

“That’s right, you’re totally a new person?”

I said half as a joke, but compared to our first meeting, he was really a different person. The face under the refined smoothed down hair was similar, but the expression on it was completely changed, and above all, the body was different. The weak appearance that seemed like it would fall over with one push, had completely disappeared. There was the taller height, but the lines of the thicker forearms through the fitted formal summer shirt were clear, too.

His back was straightened out and his shoulders were wider. Even his parents who gave birth to him wouldn’t be able to recognize him, looking at him from the back.

“They said they would even do my make-up... is it visible? It’s not weird?”

“No, it’s okay. It’s natural. You look good.”

“That is right! The best, a total handsome man!”

Yerim, whose bank account seemed like it would go broke, made a fuss. It was an S-Rank weapon that didn’t even have a market price and needed to go on auction, so a fledgling

Hunter who hadn't even gone into an S-Rank dungeon once, would normally be unable to purchase it with their financial situation.

Our Yerim, how long was it since you were self-confident that you made a lot of money; it seemed like you would become a debtor. Though she would probably pay it back soon.

"It seems the preparations are complete."

Yoohyun came in and exchanged light greetings with Myeongwoo. Then he called me over with a gesture. When I went to him, he asked in a low voice.

"Did you tell him?"

"I did. He said it didn't matter. That even if I deceived him, it's okay."

"That's good."

Yoohyun nodded his head and looked at Myeongwoo with a little gentler expression.

"Be actually nice to him now. Get along well with him."

"I'll try."

It was reply 100% completely devoid of sincerity.

The Hunter Association press conference room where Yoo Myeongwoo's skill was going to be publicized and verified was already full of journalists. The specifics weren't known yet, but it seemed like the news had spread through word of mouth.

I saw familiar faces that had already arrived in the waiting room connected to the press conference room.

"Hyung-nim, we see each other like this again!"

There was the Breaker Guild Leader Moon Hyuna and,

"Hello, Han Yoojin-nim. Have you been well all this time?"

Seseong's A-Rank Hunter with the Dragon Rider skill, Kang Soyoung. She came toward me and smiled prettily.

"Our Guild Leader has gone into a dungeon attack. He should be coming out in two to three days, but it is regretful. Who knew such a surprising thing would happen? When Guild Leader comes out, he would probably be quite surprised as well?"

“Is that so. That’s right, it seems that you do not have the dark dragon yet.”

When I asked quietly, she sighed and put on a worried expression.

“Seeing how it is taking a long time, it seems like the nest has properly appeared. It would be good if everyone came back safely.”

“It will be fine.”

She said it was dungeon that had appeared quite a long time ago and had complete attack information, so there probably wouldn’t be much trouble.

While I was speaking briefly with Kang Soyoung, Myeongwoo had been surrounded by people in an instant. I wondered if I should go over, before deciding not to. There would be similar matters often from now on, so he should get used to it, since he decided to stand alone.

‘And he doesn’t look troubled either.’

The face that appeared occasionally was more relaxed than I would’ve thought. Our Myeongwoo had changed outwardly and inwardly in a short period of time. I had known that he could get an SS-Rank skill from the beginning, but I didn’t even dream that he would change that much.

As I watched, my lips kept on quirking up, pleased.

“You’re not going over there?”

I said to Yoohyun, who was next to me. Hunter Kang Soyoung had also gone over there.

“What suddenly after just coming here.”

“What do you mean suddenly. Do your work, Guild Leader.”

“At any rate, instead of coaxing Yoo Myeongwoo, asking hyung would probably be faster.”

What was he talking about now.

“You should do your own work – why would you unreasonably ask me?”

“You’re not going to help me?”

...It wasn’t that. He was actually acting shameless. Still, it was better than saying ‘hyung, just

stay there still’.

Shortly after, Myeongwoo and the Association people went out to the press conference room. I couldn’t follow, and watched through a monitor. That Myeongwoo sure looked good on screen too.

After a short greeting and introduction, Myeongwoo opened his mouth with a smiling face devoid of tension.

[The skill that I have gained is an SS-Rank production skill, Gold Forge’s Owner.]

[If it is a forge, then is only metal item production possible?]

[If it is an item that contains metal, then anything can be made.]

The reply was also composed. I was proud.

[What is the highest item rank than can be produced? If it is an SS-Rank, can even SS-Rank be made as well?]

At the journalist’s question, Myeongwoo took out the Parmini’s Ice Wood Spear instead of replying. At the appearance of the significant spear covered in a blue chill, the whole assembly was briefly quiet. In the meantime, the Association’s appraiser held the mic.

[That this Parmini's Ice Wood Spear is an S-Rank weapon containing an S-Rank ice attribute reinforcement skill, is guaranteed through the Korean Hunter Association's name.]

An S-Rank weapon containing an S-Rank skill. In order to take pictures of the appearance of Korea's sixteenth S-Rank weapon, flashes burst out noisily. After a short moment, Myeonwoo opened his mouth again.

[There is no limit on an item's production rank.]

This time, the silence was a little longer.

"Wow, crazy."

Moon Hyuna, who was watching the monitor with me in the waiting room, mumbled. We hadn't even told the Association's side that there was no limit on the production rank. We just told them that he had made an S-Rank weapon and that it was an SS-Rank production skill.

I was also regretful that Sung Hyunjae wasn't here. I had wanted to see that ahjussi's surprised face.

[Th-then. Are you saying that you can make, past an S-Rank, an SS-Rank and higher item as

well?]

[As there is no limit on the skill, it is possible. However, in order to make SS-Rank and higher items, there needs to be proficiency, experience making a few more items. As I have already made an S-Rank item in a short amount of time, it will not be that far in the future for an SS-Rank item to come out. A regular supply could be possible someday as well.]

I heard the sound of somebody swallowing dryly. The hearts of all the Hunters, especially high rank Hunters, listening to Myeongwoo's words now, would be pounding.

It was a story that couldn't help but make you restless.

An SS-Rank weapon. Possibly even higher than that. Even F-Rank me was looking forward to it, so could the high rank Hunters who would directly receive the benefit, be able to stay still?

Even while the trivial questions were continuing, the waiting room was still locked in silence. Moon Hyuna had an expression like she was deep in thought with her mouth closed.

In the middle of everyone's seriousness and gravity, I alone had my lips continuing to quirk up, so it was a little embarrassing but still great. If Myeongwoo's stats were still F, it would have been a little worrying to confess it like this on a large scale, but now he was C. If you were stat C, as long as you reliably put on equipment, there wasn't a big worry. He could just directly make S-Rank equipment and plaster them on. If need be, he could also escape to the Forge.

Ah, I really didn't have any worries. He was really amazing, our Myeongwoo.

While I was smirking, looking at the monitor, Yerim appeared. She was the Parmini's Ice Wood Spear's new owner. As much as he had received help from Haeyeon Guild all this time, he had passed the the first S-Rank weapon over for a mere hundred billion.

It really wasn't much. If it was an S-Rank weapon, even normal ones without a skill had an auction starting price of a hundred billion.

The face of Yerim, who was holding the Ice Wood Spear in her arms, was shining bright.

[Thank you, Hunter Yoo Myeongwoo-nim. And thank you too, to Hunter Han Yoojin-nim!]

...Wait why did I come up? And that wasn't the end either.

[That I gained the SS-Rank skill was partly due to Haeyeon Guild's cooperation, but the largest facilitator was Hunter Han Yoojin. It is not enough to express it with a simple word like savior-.]

Myeongwoo! This was a live broadcast! Argh, someone turn off the monitor! Or at least the sound! No, stop talking.

I felt stinging gazes striking me from all directions. I felt like I would die from embarrassment.

[1] lit. 'phone gets on fire' and 'even parental in-law's third cousin'

Chapter 73: < Blacksmith's Debut (3) >

< Blacksmith's Debut (3) >

The eager tribute that was like an acceptance speech dedicated toward one's parents finally ended. If you took out the point that my name took the place where parents should have been, it was quite good. It was as moving as an F-Rank, who had turned over a new leaf, putting in all of his sincerity.

.....If it was now, it was probably okay to shut myself inside for about a month. I mean, Myeongwoo, that guy, really, really, how was he like that like it was nothing? If I was Myeongwoo's parent, I probably would have been brimming with moved tears... We were just friends..... And we weren't even close childhood friends of twenty years, and hadn't even known each other for two months.

'Wow, crap... everyone is staring at me with gazes asking what kind of a relationship we have.....'

It wasn't just here. On the monitor, questions mentioning my name were coming up in the press conference room, too.

Uh... alright, well. It's okay. Myeongwoo was probably being like that with good intentions. It was just something that was done with me being embarrassed briefly. Though it was a pity that the interest didn't disperse.

I had expected that when the blacksmith without a limit on item production rank appeared, I would be buried a little, but it seemed like it would be the opposite. Myeongwoo, you should've just gotten the spotlight by yourself; why were you passing the ball to me?

Shortly after, the discussion ended, and Myeongwoo and Yerim came back to the waiting room. Yerim didn't put the Ice Wood Spear in her inventory, and was hugging it tight, and that Myeongwoo looked straight at me and smiled brightly.

Unlike before, there wasn't anyone who grabbed him before he came over to me. As if they had promised to, everyone just stared.

"How was I?"

Myeongwoo asked, with a smiling face. What do you mean how were you.

"You did well."

Would I ruin it here? I should smile.

Truthfully, he did speak well. And there wasn't anything he left out. Even related to guilds, he did well in extending a hand and pacifying them by saying that it hadn't been long since he got the skill and that he would strive to train for a long time, so he wasn't planning on being affiliated with a particular guild, and that he would receive support instead.

"But wasn't it a little excessive to pass the ball to me that much? You're the main character."

Myeongwoo opened his mouth while glancing around the surroundings.

"I did it on purpose though."

"...Huh?"

"Of course I was being a hundred percent sincere, but it was my intention to publicly emphasize every single word."

.....Even just half a month ago, he was quite gentle, kind, and shy. Was it possibly a side effect of the skill?

"Uh... why?"

“To let them know they wouldn’t get a single thing if they bothered you.”

Myeongwoo said in a clear voice, as if telling the surrounding people to listen.

“That’s why I purposely said I wouldn’t go public until I made an S-Rank item. I have to hand over at least an S-Rank weapon for there to be an effect.”

It was a confident and proud face. Though truthfully it was a little baffling and dumbfounding.

“Thanks. Really.”

Those two words came out on their own. Was it possible for me to not be thankful? He must’ve wanted to be acknowledged even one day faster, but he held back. He didn’t enjoy alone even the moment he saw light at the end of a long darkness.

He was giving enough for me to wonder if it was alright to accept this; what more could I say in front of him?

“Ah, it’s not much.”

Seeing how he was bashful, he really was the Myeongwoo I knew.

“Nobody would be able to bother me, for fear of getting written off by you, really.”

I spoke jokingly, but it was the truth. Unlike with Kiseungsu, where would there be Hunters who would want to leave the sight of the blacksmith who could actually increase the abilities of a Hunter? If I were possibly kidnapped again, from high ranks to low ranks, all Hunters might roll up their sleeves and take action, in order to look good in front of Myeongwoo.

Since he had excessively paraded our closeness, people could use me as a hostage and extort valuable equipment, but that wouldn't be easy. If they did well, it would be a mega success, but if they failed, they would lose everything.

“You're really reliable.”

Although the pouring gazes filled with evil intentions were stinging.

Appearing with a highest grade S-Rank weapon, the world's first equipment production Hunter!

Gold Forge's Owner, Yoo Myeongwoo. Revealed that there is no limit on produced item's rank!

There is nothing like rank limitation, the appearance of a god's hand!

From an F-Rank Hunter, into SS-Rank in one morning!

The secret to acquiring an SS-Rank skill?!

The image of the press conference was placed in the main page[1] of a large portal site, and in an instant, articles related to Myeongwoo covered all sorts of sites. The real-time search words were all taken up by, starting from 1st, Yoo Myeongwoo, Gold Forge's Owner, Ice Wood Spear, S-Rank equipment, SS-Rank equipment, rank limit, etc. My name was there too, but let's consider it not.

The reactions in comments were also incredible. It wasn't that there weren't any malicious comments, but most of them were envious. It wasn't a mid rank, high rank Hunter from the start, but an F-Rank that became a hit, so people's interest was even higher. There were also a lot of comments asking what an F-Rank had to do to get a good skill.

'If it's this atmosphere, there would be many more people who'd hold back on going straight to the Awakening Centers, and would check for special skills first.'

[Gold Forge's Owner, Yoo Myeongwoo. There is burning interest pouring out toward this first blacksmith Hunter from, of course within the nation, but also from overseas.]

Even from the TV, they were repeating over and over again that 'our Meyongwoo is this

impressive!'. Do more, more.

"Wow, Yerim, look at this. They're saying it's a definite method to get an SS-Rank skill."

Yerim, who was breaking an armchair while playing with Blue, burst out laughing. Yerim, that was a newly bought one.

"What did they say the method was? There are lots of skills I want to have!"

"Lately, the world is in an uproar about the SS-Rank Gold Forge's Owner skill, right? If you get a high rank skill like this, your life will completely change. But, not only is normal Awakening difficult... Why are there so many useless words?"

"Oh, that's bait. It probably says 'what can you do to get one', this and that, 'the weather is something', 'health is something', 'anyways SS-Rank skills are the best', and end with that."

Yerim said, hurling Blue up as if to make her touch the ceiling.

-Kkyaa kkyaa!

"But I had thought that ahjussi didn't like looking up those kinds of things. For ahjussi's case, there also were articles plastered everywhere and real-time search words coming up and such. That time, you stopped after watching the TV a little."

“Is this the same as my case?”

At that time, seeing the articles come up, I didn't even open up the internet window. Why would I look at that? No matter how good of an article it was, there definitely wouldn't have been no malicious comments. Even if a virtuous messiah had descended down and gave miracles and mercy, guys who put up comments like 'isn't this a hoax', 'who does he think he is'[2], 'does he think he's Jesus', 'he sucks'[3] definitely wouldn't disappear. So even now, I was skipping articles that mentioned me even a little bit.

Even if they became things that didn't exist, I was hit enough, so why would I choose to stab my eyes? On top of that, I didn't even really look at my social media comments.

“Yoojin. Do you have any items you need? Or something you want.”

Myeongwoo, who might have finally become embarrassed, because he couldn't look straight at the TV and was giving side-glances, suddenly asked. It seemed like he was going to make me something. Something I needed, he said.

“I can't really use anything other than stat integer increase equipment... Purposely making integer increase equipment is a waste of time and materials.”

“How about something with a special effect?”

“Special effect? Um...”

Special effects, what were there? Something that would help with the kids’ growth? Or was something that could send skills or titles to others without contact, possible? If even things like that worked, then it would be too omnipotent.

“Even as a special effect, anything isn’t possible, right?”

“Yeah. It’s fundamentally based on the materials. In order to put special skills in an item, the material that becomes that basis is necessary. Like the Ice Wood Spear that was made from a material with a powerful chill.”

So he really wasn’t omnipotent.

“Are there possibly materials that can make skills transferable or something?”

“I don’t think there are.”

“Then a defense skill type? Not something that completely blocks you off so that even allies can’t touch you, but could something that increases the body’s defense power work? Even with a one or two hour restriction.”

To use the One More as a Freebie skill, to share a skill while touching somebody, I couldn’t

use ordinary shielding. If my body itself became about A-Rank or higher in defense power for a short time, in contingencies, I could safely share the doubled attack skill effect title.

“Of the materials, there are the most defense-related ones. I’ll try making one.”

“Don’t overdo it. It’s good if I have one, but I don’t particularly need it.”

Even if the speed of the dungeons’ level of difficulty rising was faster, there would still be over 1 year left until high rank dungeons burst open. If I diligently raised the kids before then, I wouldn’t need to go as far as sharing my skills.

Not having cause to lead a stat F-Rank’s body and put myself forward would be the best.

Already one month had passed from the day of the first dungeon attack after my regression. In other words, the standby time of the My Brat is the Best skill that I put on the kids had ended. Time really was fast.

For Yerim, I didn’t have to think, and chose the Cold Resistance(A) skill. Since, even if an ice attribute reinforcement skill appeared from the Ice Wood Spear, a resistance skill was necessary. Resistance skills for your own attribute normally grew fast, so it was better to quickly get it and raise it into S-Rank.

Yerim didn't have any particular conditions this time either, and only needed to raise just 1 more level.

On the other hand, it wasn't easy to choose for Myeongwoo.

'You really can't get a sense of which skills are good at all, with just looking at the skill names.'

The problem was that there were a lot of what seemed like special skills.

[Unacquired Optimized Skills

Master of Hammering(A)

Delicate Fingertips(A)

Flame Resistance(A)

Metal Classification(A)

Sharpen Knives(A)]

First, there were these five unacquired optimized skills. If you excluded Flame Resistance, all of them seemed related to production skills. And all four looked useful.

‘Should I just make him get them in order?’

It wasn’t like the skill explanation windows popped up even if I thought it over. The My Brat standby time was just one month, so it was just that if I just let him get all of them.

First, starting from Master of Hammering. When I chose it, the conditions appeared. Unlike with the Gold Forge’s Owner, it demanded only 5 level ups. He probably had already filled the other conditions. Wouldn’t it have been something like ‘hammering a thousand times’?

“Myeongwoo. You should level up before you raise your stat rank more. It gets harder to level up as your rank gets higher.”

At my words, Myeongwoo, who was marinating ribs, nodded his head. It looked tasty. Though it pricked my conscience that the Hunter-nim who was receiving attention worldwide was doing something like that to feed me.

“Anyways, I was going to raise them up to a point that’s easy to raise to.”

“Yerim said she’s going to rest for about ten days soon, so do you want to go together

then?”

“That’s good for me.”

Myeongwoo was stat C-Rank, but his levels were low and he wasn’t a combat Hunter, so something like an easy mid to low grade D-Rank dungeon would be good. Could you move into the Forge inside a dungeon, too?

“You said that there’s a living facility in the Forge, right?”

“Yeah. On the 2nd floor.”

“If you raise your stats more and become able to go into a high rank dungeon, that would be really useful. Since it’s the same as having a safe place where you can comfortably rest.”

Pushing through a place teeming with terrifying monsters for several days, was a high rank dungeon attack. A safe resting space would feel as sweet as honey to even sturdy and healthy high rank combat Hunters.

If he could really use it inside a dungeon, that Myeongwoo would be a complete jack-of-all-trades. I was starting to want to ask him to attack a dungeon with Yoohyun. Though he would probably be too busy making equipment.

After Yerim and Myeongwoo, the next person whose My Brat skill standby time had ended was none other than Peace.

[Time required for adult transformation(56:15)]

Thanks to playing with him in spare moments in the meantime, only 56 hours, two and half days, were left. Since I could decrease the time up to 3 times as fast at maximum during the time the skill is applied, it would end with one day.

I put on equipment prioritizing Stamina and Strength, and filled the training room with training tools, and even prepared restorative drinks.

“Okay, Peace. Let’s end this quickly.”

-Kkiang!

Peace tapped his tail and replied at the same time.

And one day passed straight through. I felt like I had halfway died.

“.....Peace, can you go find my cell phone for me?”

I said, stretched out on the cot. I had taken it out and put it away in case it would break while training, but I couldn't remember where I put it. Even if I remembered, I didn't think I could go get it.

-Kkyang

Peace, who was still in his juvenile appearance, brought over my cell phone and put it on top of my hand. He really was smart. It was to the point that I wondered if he could understand human words.

"It's past seven."

It was dinner time. I had to go take care of the kids' food, and I had to eat, too. Let's just close my eyes for exactly thirty minutes only, and then go up.

Thinking so, I closed them, but when I opened them, it was eleven. Oh shit. Peace, who had come up to the bed some time and was clinging right to my side, tilted his head.

"Aren't you hungry? Why didn't you wake me up?"

-Geureureung

I was going to call Myeongwoo right away, but I belatedly remembered that he had turned his cell phone off because it was getting so many calls, and contacted the dorm maintenance. The maintenance connected me to the house intercom. Thankfully, Myeongwoo was outside of the Forge.

[Don't worry. I took care of the food. I also contacted the place with the unicorns, saying that you probably couldn't make it today.]

"Really? Thanks!"

[Just take care of yourself as you work.]

Look who's talking. Anyways, it was a relief. Myeongwoo was stat C-Rank, so he could take care of Blue, too – it was great.

I ended the call as I got up from the cot. Peace also jumped down. Ugh, my hip.

"Peace, didn't you finish growing?"

-Kkiang?

"Can you get bigger just once so I can check? Hm?"

When I asked while gesturing, Peace stepped back. Then shortly after, whoosh, as something like a flame that wasn't hot rose, Peace's body grew big.

He was bigger than when he was an adolescent. He was about twice as big as that time.

It was a giant magnificent red body, with the golden mane swaying showily. The size was big, but there was no sluggish feeling. Even if you said he was in the same cat family, rather than a lion or a tiger, he had a sleek silhouette like a leopard. There was still a side that was reminiscent of a fox because of the pointy ears and the fluffy tail.

[2nd Rank Unicorn Subtype – Horned Flame Lion Peace

Current Stat Rank S

Possible Growth Stat Rank A~S

Optimized Initial Skills

Flame Breath(S) Acquired

Blaze Run(A) Acquired

Giganticize(A)[4] Acquired

Flame Resistance(A) Acquired]

“Good! You’re stat S-Rank and achieved all the initial skills!”

I had worried a little because I was growing him, not Awakening him optimally, but it was a relief. Our Peace, now you had really grown up. When I stretched out my hand, Peace touched his head to it. Now, even if I hugged just his head, there was still some left after both my arms were full.

“Our Peace, you really are good-looking.”

-Geureureu

The rumbling was also completely different from when he was little. Would Yoohyun take Peace along when he went to the S-Rank dungeon attack in a few days? Though it seemed too early. I should contact him first of all.

Shortly after contacting him that Peace’s growth finished, Yoohyun came down to the training room.

[1] this just says 'main' in eng transliterated, but since it's talking about portals and sites I'm assuming it means main page of a web portal

[2] it's more like 'he's really messing around, isn't he' or sth like that...? Idk how to translated the v used exactly but it's like 'putting yourself forward and acting frivolously/foolishly', and it's written in slang sort of way. Anyways, imho, the best way to get the general meaning and connotation was like this, even if it's not a direct tl

[3] all of these were written w/o commas or ' ' (usually when I put in ' ' anyways, they're not actually in text, but eng needs them to make sense) so it might be just one big stream of conscience comment, or be divided up differently

[4] i edited the last ch that this came up in, a couple days after i posted it, so i'm adding a footnote again for ppl who might have not noticed. after some thought, i decided this is more likely to be 'giganticize' rather than 'giant fire' so i've changed the tl

Chapter 74: < Hatchling Class[1] Teacher (1) >

< Hatchling Class[1] Teacher (1) >

"He looks bigger than the Horned Flame Lions I've seen in the dungeon?"

Yoohyun said, after seeing Peace. He was a little negligent during this time, but ultimately, when he saw the adult form, he had an incredibly excited gleam in his eyes.

“Really?”

“Yeah. According to the individual’s ability, the number that comes out also differs, but I haven’t ever seen a guy this big before. Though we’ve only attacked it twice.”

Even if they were monsters of the same rank and type, they weren’t the same like twins. Their abilities and the skills they had were a little different.

And their size being big usually meant their abilities were good. That he was outstanding – my mood became good on its own.

“He got all of his optimized initial skills, too. Flame Breath, Blaze Run, Giganticize. And he already had Fire Resistance.”

“That’s impressive. There wasn’t one that used all of those either.”

“Our Peace really did grow up well.”

When I stretched out my arms to hug him again, as if he was waiting, Peace’s body became smaller. In an instant, he turned back into a juvenile. But the status window was different from before.

[2nd Rank Unicorn Subtype – Horned Flame Lion Peace

Current Stat Rank A]

There wasn't a 'juvenile' sign, and the stat rank wasn't C, but A. He also had all of the skills. It was a pity that he wasn't S-Rank, but he was strong even after becoming little.

"Come here."

-Kkiang!

Yoo Hyun stared at Peace, who immediately was held in my arms, with eyes that seemed to think it was dumbfounding.

"Be reasonable about accepting him acting childish. He's all grown now."

"So what? He wants to be held."

We had to be apart for several days at a time when he went into a dungeon, so who cared if he acted a little childish? And even if he was all grown, it was thanks to the skill, and his actual age probably wasn't much. Wasn't it okay to say he was still a child?

“Just give me the owner’s token.”

Yoohyun held out his hand. It was obvious that I had to return the taming item, but when I actually had to take it out, I hesitated.

“You have to be good to our Peace.”

I said, taking the token out of my inventory and holding it out.

“You’re not going to take a kid with no experience into this time’s S-Rank dungeon right away, right? Just pass over this one, and get in sync with each other in about an A~B first. You have to raise his levels too. I’ll ask Myeongwoo to make equipment for Peace to use. Even in dungeons, regularly make sure to feed him, and even if he doesn’t listen to you well, soothe him well. Both words and actions get through to him well. If he gets hurt, get him treated right away, too. He hasn’t gotten an injury while fighting yet, so he might be alarmed.”

“.....Hyung.”

“Hm?”

“Peace is much stronger than hyung. You don’t have to worry.”

“Still, how could I not worry? I worry about you too, you know?”

I worried that the dungeon would go weird and something like a Lauchtas would pop out. System people, please manage it well. Our Yoohyun was still young, so if he met something like a 1st Rank dragon type, he wouldn't even know to run away. The difference of 5 years was big.

As expected, I had to quickly grow him too. Growth before new skills. The My Brat standby time had passed, so it would probably be perfect to use it on him before he went into the S-Rank dungeon this time.

Yoohyun took the owner's token and put it in his inventory. Even until then, Peace stayed quietly in my arms. I didn't feel anything had become different.

“Come here.”

At Yoohyun's order, Peace twitched the ends of his ears as if they were trembling. He exuded a sense of it being annoying, but still, he went over to Yoohyun. Then, he looked distastefully at his changed owner once, and then came back to me.

“So he does listen to my words.”

Taming wasn't a skill that completely manipulated monsters. It was to the point of 'I'm the leader so follow me'. So I had worried, but it was relief that he did follow. Would something

like a bond over wrecking a dungeon together form?

Even so, they were still indifferent to the point of chilliness.

“I told you to be good to Peace beforehand. You didn’t even pay attention even while living in the same building. Pick the people who’ll receive the tokens for the unicorns ahead of time, and make them look after them.”

“Okay. But there shouldn’t much of a problem with Peace. We already have an agreement, more or less.”

“What agreement?”

“An agreement that I’ll help with him needing to increase his abilities since he can’t trust just anybody.”

...Exactly when did they reach that kind of agreement? It was probably at that dungeon. I was getting curious over what the two of them did during the 30 minutes I wasn’t there.

“Hello, Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

I said, going into the the stamina training room for high rank Hunters. I saw all sorts of exercise equipment in the large interior. Outwardly, they looked normal, but all of them weren't ordinary machines. There was the durability, but in order to bear the terrifying load, there were even weight reduction measures on the bottom of the machines.

Kim Sunghan saw me and came off the shoulder press machine. The well laid out muscles were clear through the thin shirt. I was envious. Should I also exercise a bit?

"What is the occasion, coming all the way here?"

He came towards me, smiling gently. I still wasn't adjusted to Kim Sunghan's kindness. What was up with that keyword effect? Though he did apologize that he judged me wrong even before the keyword application.

"It is not anything in particular; I was just thinking of expressing my gratitude for looking after me all this time."

Though the real purpose was using the My Brat skill. Last time, I had given a growth buff before he had gone into a dungeon, but this time, I was thinking of giving him a skill. I could probably just choose Indomitable Body or Regeneration.

I smiled lightly back and used the My Brat skill, when,

[Target Kim Sunghan's growth has reached the minimum requirement.]

An unexpected message window popped up. What was this?

[If the conditions are met during the My Brat is the Best skill application, growth to stat S-Rank is possible.]

...Huh? Growth to S-Rank is possible? Already?

“What is the matter? Do you possibly have anywhere you are hurt?”

Kim Sunghan asked worriedly at me, who was standing blankly.

“No, there was just something... I had to think about.”

[Meet one of the below conditions for target Kim Sunghan’s stat growth

Disposing an A-Rank dungeon boss with one blow

Solo hunting an S-Rank monster

Hunting an SS-Rank monster with less than 10 people

※Even if conditions are not met, when the maximum requirement for growth is satisfied, he will be grown into stat S-Rank.]

After a short moment, a continuing message window popped up. It looked like the system people were working in real time.

‘Did it meant that that he could directly increase in rank once the amount of growth was the minimum requirement level, though the condition fulfillment? And if he can’t meet the conditions, then he slowly grows into an S-Rank?’

Kim Sunghan was still an A-Rank after 5 years later. Even if he received a growth buff, it would take more than three to four years to get to stat S-Rank. So, obviously, we should aim for meeting the conditions, but.

‘To think it’s killing an A-Rank dungeon boss with one blow.’

Kim Sunghan-ssi was a defense aptitude Hunter, though. Even if he was a combat aptitude, it was impossible for an A-Rank Hunter to dispose of an A-Rank boss with one blow. Solo hunting an S-Rank monster was obviously impossible, too.

But participating in an SS-Rank monster attack was, well, first, SS-Rank monsters themselves didn’t exist yet.

I remembered that the S-Rank dungeon bosses until now were about mid grade S-Rank at most. Even bird types that were low in abilities compared to rank didn't come out as 1st Rank, probably. The one Riette caught was probably about SS-Rank, but it wasn't a normal route.

'Do I have to get him to get a skill first and then wait for an SS-Rank monster to come out?'

Though I didn't know when they would come out. If it was as it was originally, it would take 3 years. Even if they came out early, I got stuck on it having to be under 10 people and during the My Brat skill application. The duration time was 3 days, so in the end, that meant I had to go in, too. How could you catch up to a boss in 3 days? Or you had to aim for a dungeon break.

All three of them really weren't easy conditions.

"Kim Sunghan-ssi. Do you possibly have an attack skill as well?"

"Yes. I have one A-Rank proximity attack skill. But, as I am a defense aptitude, it is not that strong compared to the rank."

Kim Sunghan, who was looking down at me worriedly, answered.

He did have an attack skill. Then I could apply the Veteran F-Rank title's doubled attack skill effect.

'And if I ask Yoohyun to give S-Rank equipment and get him to wear them, and he receives even Yerim's buff, I think he could probably kill an A-Rank dungeon boss monster in one blow... but the problem is that I have to go into an A-Rank dungeon.'

And if it was a proximity attack skill, I had to stick right next to Kim Sunghan's side. If the boss was disposed of in one stroke, I probably wouldn't get attacked, but I probably wouldn't be able to handle Kim Sunghan's movements. I thought it would be pure physical attack, but how big would the recoil be?

As expected, did I have to wait until an SS-Rank monster appeared? But it was an S-Rank defense aptitude Hunter. Unlike fledgling Yerim, he was Kim Sunghan, who had ample experience and had worked together with Yoohyun a lot. If the two of them went into a dungeon together, there wouldn't be much need to worry. He would be reliable.

'An A-Rank dungeon... what should I do?'

In the end, I went back home after chatting a little with Kim Sunghan and without being able to use the My Brat skill.

If it seemed like it really wouldn't work out, I would've made him get a new skill, but it was a problem because it was ambiguous. Going into an A-Rank dungeon itself didn't seem like it would pose a great danger.

‘Since the number of S-Ranks that I can mobilize right now is about five.’

Adding onto Han Yoohyun, Bak Yerim, and Peace, I could ask Riette for help, and I could call Moon Hyuna over as the price of borrowing the gryphon. If I counted even Riette’s younger brother, it would be six.

And if we went into a low grade among A-Rank dungeons, then I didn’t need as many as six. It would be enough with four, with two for the dungeon attack, and two for my protection.

‘I just need a method of protection while hunting the boss.’

Wasn’t there one?

“Yoojin.”

While I was rummaging through my memories, wondering if there was a usable item among the items that had come out around now, Myeongwoo suddenly spoke to me.

“Here. Take this.”

“Hm? What is it?”

Looking at the thing that was held out, it was a crude metal bracelet.

[Nameless Bracelet – Undecided

It is imperfect, but contains a powerful strength.]

What was it really? When I looked at him with eyes asking for an explanation, Myeongwoo opened his mouth a little shyly.

“A while ago, you said you wanted an item that increases the defense power of the body itself. It turned out that that isn’t easy.”

“Don’t mind it too much.”

“That bracelet is still a usable one that came out among the experimental ones. It’s one time use and limited to 10 minutes, but it can nullify any damage.”

At Myeongwoo’s words, I was taken aback inside and opened my status window. I saw a new skill that appeared.

[Incomplete(Undecided)]

Both the skill name and rank were undecided and the the explanation window didn't even pop up.

"Theoretically, there's no restriction on the attack rank it can nullify. I checked that it can definitely nullify up to an S-Rank flame attack, with Ismual's help."

"I mean, you....."

I couldn't speak. Why was this guy alone outside of common sense at the drop of a hat? To think that it nullified any damage and that there wasn't a damage rank restriction either. I had just meant merely making an F-Rank body a little more durable. Even if it wasn't a lot, about C-Rank, I would have shot an celebratory artillery salute overflowing with thanks.

But what was this? He was little scary. If I didn't have Fear Resistance, I might've been like 'gasp, you are not at a level I can handle' and stepped back.

".....Even if you say it's one time use, it's really not a joke."

"It's all thanks to the materials. So, I can't make a lot of them."

"Exactly what is the material?"

“That’s still a secret.”

Myeongwoo laughed, telling me to look forward to it. Was it L-Rank or something? ...Could it be?

“Don’t use materials that are too expensive. You have to make even better things later.”

He just smiled, and there was no reply. Hey punk... pointlessly making me uneasy. Still, he would probably keep a limit. I was stat F, you know, F.

Anyways, it was possible to apply the doubling attack skill effect to Kim Sunghan, with this. 10 minutes was enough. Now, there was only one obstacle left.

‘Yoohyun, it’s an S-Rank. An S-Rank defense Hunter.’

If I spoke well, he would probably be understanding.

“Kim Sunghan’s stats can grow to S-Rank as long as conditions are met?”

Yoohyun had an expression that said he couldn’t believe it.

“Kim Sunghan-ssi originally could have Awakened as S-Rank. Maybe because of that, conditions popped up, saying that he filled the minimum growth requirements.”

When I told him the growth conditions, the gleam in Yoohyun’s eyes settled darkly.

“It looks like there isn’t any we can do right away. Like an S-Rank growth condition, it’s difficult. At any rate, the most likely one is the SS-Rank monster attack, but there aren’t any within the country, and looking for one overseas-.”

“Yoohyun.”

“Hm?”

“There’s me.”

I said, pointing to myself. Yoohyun tilted his head, looking doubtful.

“What about hyung?”

What did you mean ‘what’.

“Doubled attack skill effect. And sharing is possible. Though it has to be through contact. If you give S-Rank equipment to Kim Sunghan, and add even Yerim’s buff, killing an A-Rank boss should be sufficiently possible.”

Yoohyun, who had been thinking over my words with a slightly blank expression, frowned hard.

“Hyung, are you crazy?”

“Your words are too harsh towards your hyung.”

“What would hyung say if a stat F-Rank with nonexistent combat-type, defense-type skills said they would go into an A-Rank dungeon?”

“Hm, that guy’s a total crazy bastard?”

Looks like they don’t want to live in the world anymore, even a D-Rank dungeon is enough for a quick suicide so that’s a waste of money, would they even be let in, what a nuisance, etc.

At my reply, that Yoohyun crossed his arms and stared at me, as if saying ‘see, look’. Still, my case was different.

“I have a B-Rank shielding skill.”

Through the earring.

“And if about two experienced S-Rank Hunters stick close to me and protect me, there shouldn’t be much of a trouble in a low grade A-Rank dungeon? I already received a reply from Moon Hyuna-ssi saying that she can help.”

I didn’t tell her in detail, and asked if she could possibly help with going around in a dungeon for about three days, but she readily agreed. Unfortunately, Riette wasn’t in the country.

“Yerim also finished dungeon attacks 10 times without an accident, so she can go into an A-Rank dungeon, and Peace is all grown. I think it’ll be enough if you supplement a few A-Ranks to you and Kim Sunghan-ssi.”

Having four S-Ranks was past being extravagant to being a disgustingly inefficient team to go into an A-Rank dungeon. There was no waste quite like this, but it was for a new S-Rank.

“...Putting aside the A-Rank dungeon, what about the boss? Kim Sunghan’s attack skill is a proximity skill. It’s a motion where you make a running start and then strike down, so a stat F can’t withstand it. Since you said the skill sharing has to be through contact, you wouldn’t be able to use an ordinary shielding skill.”

“For that problem, there’s this.”

When I held out the bracelet and explained, Yoohyun’s face said he had no words either. Our Myeongwoo really was a baffling existence in various ways.

After that, we had to argue back and forth about ‘are you going to publicize all your skills’, ‘what suddenly after coming all this way’, ‘the effect is too good’, ‘at any rate, the utility is low’, ‘it’s not like I won’t use it for my entire life’, etc., but I won in the end.

I was asked if I was crazy by Yerim and Myeongwoo, and Kim Sunghan insisted that he wouldn’t do it, but all that also passed over smoothly.

...Why was the process of going into a dungeon harder than attacking one?

[1] it’s actually ‘chick class’ but that sounded weird to me in eng... anyways in kindergartens and such in kr, classes are normally named like this, like ‘chick class’, ‘kitty class’, ‘puppy class’, etc. things kids like. So this title reads as very... day care teacher.

Chapter 75: < Hatchling Class Teacher (2) >

< Hatchling Class Teacher (2) >

There wasn’t much left for the time between S-Rank dungeon managing for both Haeyeon

and Breaker Guild, so for the S-Ranks' schedules, we were going to go into the A-Rank dungeon straight away the next day.

At any rate, there wasn't anything big to prepare. The attack time was to be within 3 days, ending in two if it was fast, for a low grade dungeon that had complete information.

We arrived at the gate management building of the low grade A-Rank dungeon, aka 'Black Golem's City'. As soon as I got out of the car holding Peace, a sleek red sportscar appeared and parked perfectly in place as if measured with a ruler. It was an adept skill that seemed like they had done only parking for ten years.

The person who got out of the sportscar was none other than Breaker's guild leader, Moon Hyuna. She was wearing a tight racing outfit with a workbelt that you could put simple possessions into. The backpack that was hanging sideways on one shoulder wasn't that big.

Those clothes, belt, and backpack should all be dungeon items or made from dungeon byproducts. It was a long sleeves and long pants outfit that didn't suit the weather, but the temperature inside the dungeon was different anyways.

Even just speaking of Yoohyun, he was wearing a coat. I remembered that it was an S-Rank item, but what was it called again?

"Hey, hyung-nim!"

Slamming the car door closed with her foot, Moon Hyuna waved one of her arms. It should be an expensive car, but a scratch would form. She treated it too carelessly.

“I’m thinking of it as going around a dungeon holding a glass bead, so even if it’s an A-Rank, there’s a little excitement. Don’t break.”

“You are not going around holding it. If you leave it quietly in a safe place, there is no need for it to break.”

“Ah, how boring. Yerim, you too, hi!”

“Hello, unni!”

The two of them hugged tight, friendly. Or no, Yerim grabbed Moon Hyuna’s arm and twisted it, and Moon Hyuna leisurely broke free and pulled Yerim into a headlock.

“Oho, your strength increased a bit?”

“Ah, ah, I yield!”

They got along well. Yerim was yelling, ‘I love you, unni! Spare me!’. It must be nice for it to be easy to say ‘I love you’. I had to say the keyword to Moon Hyuna, too.

“What are you looking at so piercingly? Jealous?”

Yoohyun said nonsense. My neck bones were weak.

In the meantime, another car arrived. The person who came out was none other than the Seseong Guild Leader Sung Hyunjae. As expected, with an unseasonal coat hanging grandly, he didn't seem like a Hunter but a young businessman.

I remembered that dark red coat. It was a first attack reward for the S-Rank dungeon 'Raining Volcano', the SS-Rank equipment Fire Dragon Sillekia's Wings. The other options were good too, but it especially had an S-Rank fire resistance, so during the ranking competitions, Yoohyun had a hard time.

'But how are dungeon reward items made?'

Could it possibly be the system people manually making them? There were things like armor, but the higher rank the item, the more there was a considerable number of modern objects, so I wondered if they were matching our world while giving them. And things like that were more expensive even if the abilities were the same. A coat or a vest really was better than a cloak or armor.

“Am I the latest person?”

Sung Hyunjae came closer, with a smile around his eyes. You did not need to come, though.

An A-Rank dungeon that was perfect for the condition was under Seseong Guild's management, so we contacted them, and they gave permission for the attack, but a useless freebie came along with it.

Korea's S-Ranks sure had a lot of free time.

"Hyung-nim, lend me Peace for a bit. To try fighting with that person."

Moon Hyuna said, staring at Sung Hyunjae with eyes filled with fighting spirit.

"The experienced people should play with experienced people. Please do not think of dragging in my still less capable kid."

"Even if he's less capable, he's an S-Rank."

"No thank you."

It wasn't a dungeon attack, and you guys should figure out your own business. I held Peace closer, and Sung Hyunjae strode over to me. The gaze looking down was full of interest.

"I heard that there was quite a fun matter that happened while I was gone."

"That was-."

"Please directly contact Hunter Yoo Myeongwoo. It wouldn't be that you do not know his contact information."

Yoohyun cut in through my words. Yoohyun should also know that Myeongwoo was keeping his cell phone off lately. Then again, it wouldn't be good for Haeyeon if Myeongwoo became close to Seseong.

Sung Hyunjae shifted his eyes and looked at Yoohyun next to me.

"Lately, when I see young master, I'm quite surprised. How did you hold back for three years? With that disposition."

"Please do not pay attention to others' household matters."

"Rather than it being others' household matters, isn't it that both the brothers aren't normal?"

Haha, they were really going around fighting with each other. Was it Yerim's turn next? I slipped back and turned to look at Kim Sunghan, who was taking care of the luggage. He also had quite a troubled gleam in his eyes.

Was this why S-Ranks didn't make teams together? Even after the level of difficulty for dungeons went up, the reason why S-Ranks maintained a minimum number within a team might not have been because the number of Hunters was lacking.

"Yoohyun, let's start to go in. Seseong Guild Leader should also leave it at that."

"It's okay to call me casually, though."

What did you want me to do? Should I call you ahjussi, like Yerim?

This attack team didn't have an A-Rank besides Kim Sunghan. Not only was it combat power that was more than enough to attack a low grade A-Rank dungeon, I would feel sorry dragging an innocent A-Rank Hunter over.

Just think, it was three guild leaders. Between our CEO, the neighboring CEO, and the CEO from over there gathered together, would employees short on abilities be more than a tactful handyman? Even just a while ago, Moon Hyuna tried to dump her bag on Kim Sunghan, and was chased away, being told to take care of her own luggage.

A normal A-Rank couldn't like me, so it was a lot better for them to not come. They could

needlessly be victims of a fight between bigshots[1], too.

The S-Ranks passed through the gate first, and I waited about 10 minutes and went into the dungeon with Peace and Kim Sunghan.

[h]!!]

Ah, yes.

In the slightly cool air inside, which was different from the weather outside, I saw a ruined city. It wasn't a modern city. The collapsed city wall, houses with only the frames remaining, and that castle far away engulfed in fog resembled those of Europe's Middle Ages. But I heard that you couldn't find completely same styles to any time period from the past.

'...Would they be traces of a different world?'

You could only see these kinds of traces of civilization in high rank dungeons. Mid ranks and lower were usually natural environments.

'And what's that?'

Between the wreckage of the buildings, there was a large track that seemed like a giant hydraulic shovel had dug a long hole. There were as many as five around twenty-to-thirty-meter-long tracks, and they were spread out like the ribs of a fan. It seemed like a giant mountain-like beast had clawed the ground.

In the surroundings, there were remains of monsters strewn about. They were cut into pieces like they were put into a blender, so it was hard to guess their original forms.

“Hyung-nim, hyung-nim!”

Moon Hyuna, who should be the owner of those remains of destruction, came over to me with a refreshed expression. While holding a giant pure white spear in one hand. The size was like she had plucked out a telephone pole.

“It’s not for fighting with that Sung Hyunjae, but let me borrow Peace!”

“...What now.”

“I haven’t ever used a kiseungsu to my heart’s content in a high rank dungeon. The mid rank ones can’t endure my strength. Without waiting for Blue to grow up, let’s finish the payment today. Hm?”

It wasn’t something bad. And Peace would build up experience while here at an A-Rank dungeon. But.

“Peace is affiliated to Haeyeon. The one you should be asking is me, so please do not grab the wrong person and act bothersome.”

Yoohyun said, cutting in with a smiling face. Like he said, the person she should be getting permission from wasn’t me.

Moon Hyuna, who was obstructed, sulkily puffed out her cheeks like a child. But the gleam in her eyes wasn’t that of a child, but of a soldier who had gone out into a battlefield for several years.

“Asking a bastard that words don’t get through to-.”

“Let us start now.”

I cut through Moon Hyuna's words and broke out of between those two. She sure did speak nicely. Our Yerim's words were rough already, so while being friendly with that woman, wouldn't she get even more rough?

"Peace."

-Kkiang!

Without speaking in length, Peace, who had jumped down from my arms, grew in size. It wasn't the completely big appearance, but a build that was about midway between the adult and adolescent forms. Looking at the status window, the stats had gone up to S.

If he was too big, it would be easy to become a target, so for this situation, that size should be about right. Our Peace was smart.

At Peace's bigger appearance, Moon Hyuna stopped the growling, and her eyes shone. Sung Hyunjae also came over, showing interest.

"He's smaller than what I'd heard. Can he adjust his build as he wants?"

"Yes. As you can see."

I took out a saddle for kiseungsu from my inventory and hung it over Peace's back. As an A-Rank kiseungsu equipment, it had options for decreasing weight and increasing speed. Suited a dungeon item, the size also automatically adjusted.

Taking the luggage and hanging it on the back of the saddle left a bitter taste in my mouth. Of course, as a highest rank combat-use kiseungsu, normally he wouldn't have much cause to carry luggage.

“Unni! I can really take all the magic stones, right?”

Yerim yelled, suddenly flying over. I was wondering what she was doing near the remains of the massacred monsters; so she was picking up magic stones.

“That’s right, you take all the ones that come out.”

At the readily given permission, Yerim smiled brightly. If she picked up and sold all the A-Rank magic stones, her debt would decrease considerably.

The nearby monsters were completely taken care of within 10 minutes, so we started moving right away. With my lacking stats, I was indebted to Peace.

The Black Golem’s City was a 2-story dungeon with the main appearing monsters being golems and undead. They were durable and tough, but they were on the slower side with only about the level of throwing boulders as long-range attacks, so it was perfect for our situation.

Rarely, low rank liches popped out, but they were poison and curse specialties, so there really wasn’t a problem.

The 1st story attack was done once you massacred the undead army that appeared after disposing a certain amount of monsters.

“These guys are so slow!”

Landing lightly on top of the head of a roughly 3-meter-tall golem, Yerim burst out laughing. She didn’t have even a little bit of tension or fear. She seemed like she had come to a field trip.

The thing floating around her was Cold Sigh. The white fog that froze the enemies had received the Ice Wood Spear’s attribute buff, and made dozens of golems unable to move a single inch.

When she flew around binding the golem group like she said, between them,

Kwagwagwagwang!!

Moon Hyuna's giant spear burst through.

As the ground was split up and a whirlwind was whipped up, hard golem fragments flew around like dead leaves. It was like breaking eggs with a boulder, so it was to the point of feeling sorry for the monsters.

"Even without a kiseungsu, Moon Hyuna-ssi is no joke."

I said, taking my eyes off the telescope. If a high rank kiseungsu with a good rushing power was added to that, there wouldn't be anyone who could block her path. If it was the current level of difficulty for dungeons, wouldn't a normal S-Rank boss go flying with one blow?

"There shouldn't be many people who can follow the destructive power focused on the end of the spear."

Yoohyun, who was riding behind me, said. I knew that the back was the most defenseless, but it should be okay even if he didn't stick close this much. Anyways it was excessive protection.

"But the course is obvious, so it's easy to avoid. Though I haven't fought her before."

"Moon Hyuna is simple in various ways. So, the combination of those two is quite fitting. There wouldn't be easier target for Moon Hyuna than those that can't avoid."

Sung Hyunjae, who was walking slightly apart, also spoke.

With the added attribute reinforcement, Yerim's skill in binding opponents was exceptional. It was that level with just the sighing[2], so if Shadowless Day was added, it would be no joke.

Just look even now. She lightly froze the undead that were weaker than the golems and,

Sswaaa-!

Without Moon Hyuna having to go over, she shot down Pale Rain and shattered them into pieces. The scattering ice pieces received sunlight and shone glaringly.

She took out a magic stone detector and quickly collected the magic stones, before lightly flying around and binding the next golem group. She was having a lot of fun, huh.

"Facing off against the young master should be more enjoyable than Moon Hyuna."

Sung Hyunjae suddenly tossed out, while we were watching the monsters be swept away.

"Please come after taking off that coat. I will let you face off against me."

Why was that Yoohyun taking that up? I was wondering if it would become peaceful for a while because we were far from Moon Hyuna, who was picking fights with Sung Hyunjae, and Yerim, who quibbled with Yoohyun, but now the remaining two were staring each other down.

Fuck, Sung Hyunjae, you ahjussi, don't open up your coat.

"A golem group is moving in the northwest. If the Seseong Guild Leader also has not come to play, then

please take some action.”

“I told you to call me casually.”

“I am asking this of you, Sung Hyunjae-ssi. I do not have enough stamina, and there are kids waiting for me at home, to stay long in a dungeon, so I would like to end this quickly. Please cooperate.”

I didn’t really have too little stamina, so please do not put on a tearful face, Kim Sunghan-ssi.

“Since our Han Yoojin-gun is asking, I can’t not listen.”

Sung Hyunjae smiled, pretending to be a good person, and turned around. That’s right, get lost. Though he would probably come back soon.

“Hey, and why are you taking up somebody picking a fight? What are you going to do, fighting here? Do you want to see innocent me get hurt?”

“Of course we’ll fight after Bak Yerim and Moon Hyuna come back and we’ve gone a safe distance away.”

Just look at him speak. He didn’t say that he wouldn’t fight. Then again, S-Rank guys didn’t take it easy like this, so that was probably why the ranking competition was such a success. Were the belligerent ones S-Ranks, and cooperative ones F-Ranks?

“There’s not even a healer here. Don’t. No, even if there is a saint supporting, I don’t want to see you get hurt doing something useless, okay?”

“...Okay. But Sung Hyunjae would probably keep on picking a fight.”

“Can’t that ajjussi act his age; why’s he like this?”

I grumbled, after checking to make sure Sung Hyunjae had gone far enough away. Yoohyun was still young, so you could say he could be like that. If you’re twenty, wasn’t it an age where you should be high-spirited, and would want to try out your own strength, and easily lose your patience?

But why was an ajjussi who was sufficiently old enough like that?

“Since there’s no reason for S-Ranks to gather in a dungeon like this. It’s a perfect situation to measure each other’s abilities. It’s an A-Rank dungeon, so there’s not much to see against monsters, and we want to go up against each other at least casually. Not just Sung Hyunjae, but Moon Hyuna and me too.”

“Still, hold back. Do things like that when I’m not here.”

We should’ve left out that person, Sung Hyunjae, at least. Whew, Peace was the most good-hearted.

Even after that, those S-Ranks guys were busy circling each other. On top of that, even Yerim, who fell short relatively, put herself forward, saying she was confident if a penalty according to the difference in stats was given.

Stuck in between them, what other option was there but to separate them?

“Yerim, there’s a group of undead scattered in the east. It’s a bit far, but you’re the fastest, so can you go?”

“Between the city walls, golems are gathered in a way that is perfect to hit. It would be perfect if Hyuna-ssi would go.”

“Yerim and Hyuna-ssi have caught a lot of them, so you go this time, Yoohyun.”

“Sung Hyunjae-ssi, you look bored, so please take a light walk. I think there is something moving behind those collapsed buildings. Ah, yes, Hyunjae-ssi. That is fine, right?”

While I was diligently chattering like this, before I knew it, the fog that was covering the old castle in the middle of the city disappeared.

-Oowuhhh

Along with a gloomy cry, the castle door opened wide and the undead army poured out. There were also black golems that were about twice as big as the golems that had come out until now, placed here and there.

It was an incredible number that seemed overbearing, but I wasn't nervous at all. Obviously.

Who should I send this time?

[1] lit. 'a shrimp's back bursts in a whale fight'

[2] yj uses a word that means 'a sigh of regret, bemoaning' here instead of the 'sigh' in cold sigh, so I was confused, but I think he's referring to the skill instead of saying it's a regret? In the following sentence, he uses it again, in an example that is more clear that it's referring to the skill. Anyways, he's not using a word that's actually part of the skill name, so I didn't capitalize it

Chapter 76: < Hatchling Class Teacher (3) >

< Hatchling Class Teacher (3) >

“Be careful, hyung.”

Yoohyun said, grabbing and pulling my arm. A small flame was wavering in front of my boot. Peace stomped on it with his front paw, and put the flame out.

The undead army was melted with Yoohyun’s flames. As expected, fire was the best against undead. The black golems that had fire tolerance were broken by Moon Hyuna.

Did it take about ten minutes to massacre them? Since they were gathered together, it ended even faster. If it was an A-Rank team, they would’ve needed prep work to disperse the army in order to avoid a melee, but in the face of an overwhelming fire power, the headcount was pointless.

“What kind of statue could this have been?”

I tapped the statue that only had the stand left, with my foot. Even the engraved words were damaged, so I couldn’t recognize it.

The 2nd floor gate had appeared, but debtor Yerim needed time to pick up magic stones. And the surroundings needed to be safely handled before I could go to the 2nd floor.

Moon Hyuna and Sung Hyunjae had gone up first, and I went inside the castle with the remaining three. It was because I had wanted to look around while there was time.

“There’s nothing that I can recognize.”

The outside was a normal castle, but the inside was completely empty. There were only a few traces of murals, ceiling decorations, and various sculptures.

“That’s why I said there’s not much to see.”

“Are all the other places like this?”

“All of the places I’ve been to.”

I had wondered just in case, but it was an expected answer. Then again, if there was something there, talk would have come out in the 5 years before the regression.

‘The system people’s story was like that too, and just looking at Myeongwoo’s sunbae, it’s obvious that there are other worlds.’

Inside the dungeon, a collapsed city unrelated to our world. I didn’t think much of it before. But now, it felt ominous.

It couldn’t be that if that certain identity-unknown somebody wasn’t blocked, our world would become like this, right?

‘Is it really okay with gathering just 50 S-Ranks? Can I trust the system people, seriously?’

Water Droplet and Tree were still okay, but the other people, especially Deer, were completely..... But as the current me, I couldn’t do anything otherwise. For now, I could only trust and follow them.

I had to trust and follow them, but suddenly I came back to reality.

.....I mean, I had just wanted to regress and live comfortably. Why was I in an A-Rank dungeon crowded with S-Ranks? If I had just been ‘yeah, okay’ when Yoohyun told me to live for just 3 years locked up, um... would that be a ruined world ending after 5 years?

Wasn’t there someone else to do it besides me? I should’ve asked that. Right now was little difficult, and

I should ask after going into a suitable F-Rank dungeon with Peace. It shouldn't be nobody but me.

"Hyung, what's the matter?"

"Are you possibly tired?"

When I stared blankly at a heavily damaged mural for a long time, Yoohyun and Kim Sunghan spoke to me worriedly.

"No, I was just... um, well I am a little tired."

Where was my life flowing away to? Would it get easier after gathering the 50 S-Ranks? And I could be through with the special skill Awakening after the system disappears in 10 years.

That's right, let's just endure for 10 years. I just had to be worked to the bone for 10 years.

"Your complexion does not look good – can you walk?"

"Let's stop looking around and go out and rest. Go up on Peace. No, should I lift you up?"

-Geureureung

What were they talking about? I was a stat F-Rank, not an invalid who could die any day.

"I am fine. I'm fine, I can walk."

I looked up at the high remote ceiling one last time.

The decoration that would've been attached had disappeared and the lonely rusted remaining chains rustled from time to time. Would there have been stained glass in that large and open empty space? Or something unusual that you couldn't even imagine could have been installed there.

And at some point, somebody else could come out and have similar thoughts, seeing the rectangular buildings and the damaged billboards.

...Let's stop with the useless delusions.

"I picked all of them up!"

When we went outside, Yerim yelled cheerfully. Of course her hands, but even her face was stained here and there with soot. I thought of a young girl breadwinner who was in debt and was doing manual labor, so I felt a little sad. Though in reality, she was in the middle of getting extra income in units of one hundred million.

"You don't have something like a hand towel?"

"Why would I pack something like that? Even if I brought a box of towels, there would be a lot of times where that wouldn't be enough while going around a dungeon."

That was true. Should I have brought over wet wipes at least?

We passed through the gate and went to the 2nd floor. Under the darkened sky, a city about twice the size of the 1st floor below was in the middle of a desolate location. Unlike the 1st floor, the city wall and the city buildings were relatively fine on the 2nd floor. There were golems swarming outside of the city walls and undead in the city, so if you went by the book, it would also serve as a place for street fights.

'They broke it all.'

One side of the high and durable city wall was collapsed like a sand castle. Past that, there were traces of buildings and monsters shoved away.

"The pickup group is going out!"

Yerim shot one hand up and flew around like she was bouncing.

Moon Hyuna and Sung Hyunaje, who had gone up to the 2nd floor first, came over. When the two came closer, a sigh came out by itself.

'Those two went one round in that time.'

Those damn people. The clothes of Moon Hyuna's left arm was burnt black. Sung Hyunjae's hair was roughly disheveled.

Since they were people who couldn't even be grazed by a low grade A-Rank dungeon's normal monsters, there was no doubt that the two of them had fought. Maybe Yoohyun had realized that too, because his eyes narrowed. The tips of his fingers unconsciously twitching seemed like his body was heating up with 'I want to pick a fight too'.

"Hyuna-ssi, it seems like your clothes are burnt?"

When I asked pretending I didn't know, Moon Hyuna smoothed down her exposed forearm.

"It's a mistake, a mistake."

A mistake, yeah right.

"I had thought that there would not be any monsters that could ruin the Breaker Guild Leader's clothes, but it seems I was wrong. Please be careful. You came here on my request, so if you pointlessly get injured, I will lose face."

At the words asking if she was hurt by an A-Rank monster, Moon Hyuna's eyebrows slanted a little.

"Hyung-nim, you're too much. Could mere little A-Ranks have burned my clothes? Of course it was that guy who did it. That guy."

At her confessing at once, I put on an expression that was as dumbfounded as possible.

"You were picking a fight even before coming into the dungeon, and finally you have really fought? In the first place, you have come here in the same team, so it is quite a boast to have fought. You are not even a child, and are old enough, so you should keep to at least the basics."

"No, hyung-nim. Listen. Hyung-nim probably doesn't know because your stats are low but-."

"Stats do not matter. If you want to have a contest of strength, please set aside another place accordingly. Haven't you gathered here on my request today?"

Let's quickly end this without any trouble and go home, yes?

Moon Hyuna glared at Sung Hyunjae as if feeling wronged, but Sung Hyunjae completely feigned ignorance and smoothed down his hair.

"Hyung-nim, aren't you disliking only me too much?"

“Would it be so – you must have made a mistake. Do you know how much I like Hyuna-ssi? I love you, Moon Hyuna-ssi.”

“You speak well! Say something to that guy Sung Hyunjae, too!”

“Ah, yes. I love you, Sung Hyunjae-ssi.”

“Not that!”

“Ahjussi, me too!”

“Did you pick up all the magic stones already? That’s right, I love you, too, Yerim. Our Yoohyun, too, and Sunghan-ssi, too. Of course, I love Peace, too.”

Yerim clung right to my arm and sent me a mischievous look.

“Then who is the person you love the most?”

Look at this punk.

“The person who doesn’t make trouble and listens well.”

“I think I was good today!”

A good child doesn’t pick fights with others. And Yoohyun, why were you looking expectant. The ones who made the least trouble and listened the best were definitely Peace and Kim Sunghan-ssi.

The sun set. While we hadn't yet attacked even a quarter of the wide city.

Of course, for an A-Rank dungeon attack, the speed was extremely fast. I thought it would end by the middle of tomorrow, so it probably wouldn't take even two days. If all the S-Ranks that were here had kiseungsu, I thought that the attack could have finished within one day.

Hwareureuk

A blaze that was about as big as a person's head rose up. It wasn't a campfire. But it wasn't a gas or electric fire either. It was a little dungeon item. Openly setting up a bright fire like that in the middle of an attack was taboo because it was easy to become the monsters' target, but with the current members, even if we loudly turned on music through speakers, set up a spotlight and a disco ball, and set off firecrackers, there wouldn't be a problem.

On top of that, we set up a tent. It was made of dungeon byproducts so it could be put into an inventory. But Hunters didn't use it often. Tents blocked your senses and it was inconvenient to get out of right away, so unless it was a harsh environment, people just used sleeping bags.

"You should be tired, so go inside and sleep."

Yoohyun said, placing the smaller Peace into my arms.

"That's right, ahjussi should quickly go to sleep."

"Please do not mind what happens outside and get a lot of rest."

I mean, I didn't need to sleep.

"I can stay up the night for one day. I stayed up while training Peace, so why would I suddenly lie down and sleep in a dungeon? It's better to just quickly finish and go out."

"We're going to keep on attacking. We're going to take turns with two going out to hunt and then coming back."

Thinking of the distance going and coming back, it would be better for me to follow. And why two people each of all things? These guys didn't seem like they would simply catch monsters and come back.

"Still, it would be faster for me to come along."

"It's dark so it's dangerous. Just rest comfortably, okay?"

That guy Yoohyun said with an excessively gentle tone and expression. When I looked to the side, Yerim's eyes were gleaming and she was fidgeting with the Ice Wood Spear. Moon Hyuna had changed her split top in the meantime and Sung Hyunjae had also changed his gloves.

They had made up their minds.

Truthfully, they were amazing people for considering me this much. Putting aside Yoohyun and Yerim, the remaining two wouldn't have paid attention to other's gazes after Awakening. That those strong-willed people would be well-behaved in front of me was impressive. However.

"Alright, I'll sleep. But, you know."

I tried to not go so far as to use this method.

"Just catch monsters. Don't do anything else. Yerim, you too. It is the same for you two people as well. If I happen to see evidence that the team members have fought each other."

I swallowed a sigh and continued.

“I will tell Hunter Yoo Myeongwoo. That I told you not to fight over and over again and yet you ignored it, so I could not sleep and my stomach hurt and I even felt like I would cry from the stress. I will hold my head and bemoan that thanks to that, I became sick from the anger, and that I felt like I would die because of those people. Then there really will be absolutely nothing for you. You have all seen the broadcast, right? And you have heard of the matter inside the waiting room?”

The faces that were like ‘what joke is this’ at first slowly stiffened. The kiseungsu were already in contracts, but Myeongwoo was different. Myeongwoo, I’m sorry, but let me borrow your strength for a moment.

“No, ahjussi. I haven’t even been properly equipped with equipment yet. I just have one spear.”

“Then you just don’t have to fight. Get along well with your team members.”

“It’s just lightly competing; we wouldn’t go so far as to fight.”

“There’s no exception just because you’re my younger brother.”

What did you mean ‘lightly’. I haven’t seen the ranking competitions just once or twice, and the people who were impatient because they couldn’t go all the way to the end were the S-Ranks. Leaving two alone for exactly 10 minutes ended with clothes being burnt, so my head hurt just imagining how far they would go if they were far away.

“Ah, and I will extend good will toward the good-willed informer. Enough to be satisfied.”

They could collude and destroy evidence, so I added this and then went into the tent.

-Gyareureung

“Right, right. Peace. Let’s sleep together for the first time in a while.”

Our Peace really was the most good-hearted.

I had slept better than I would’ve thought, and when I opened my eyes,

[SS-Rank skill, ‘Terrifying Hatchling Class Teacher’, acquired!> □ <]

A message window was popped up. I mean, what was this... but this.....

‘It must’ve been the Deer bastard.’

Please stop the Deer bastard from naming the title skills.

-Chirp

The □□□□□□□ cried softly. It didn’t see dad for a long time. Actually, it was just the second day, but for the young □□□, it felt extremely long.

-Kkyaa! Kkyaa!

“Blue, no! You’re a good girl, right, come here!”

Haeyeon’s A-Rank Hunter stretched out a hand toward the young gryphon who was hanging on the ceiling lights. They had received the owner’s token from Han Yoojin, but maybe because she was still young, no matter how much she was soothed, she couldn’t be still.

The Hunter, who had grabbed Blue and pulled her off the ceiling, turned to look at the sullenly drooping ball of feathers.

“Chirpie, what’s wrong? Are you hungry?”

-Cheeep

The □□□ flapped and jumped down from the sofa. The place it was trudging to slowly was none other than Han Yoojin’s bedroom.

-Chirp chirp!

“Should I open the door for you?”

The □□□ that had gone through the opened door, tilted its small head and looked up at the bed. When it flapped and jumped, the Hunter raised the □□□ and placed it on the bed.

“Your dad isn’t here. He should be back around tomorrow.”

-Chirp

The □□□ collapsed on the empty bed. The Hunter looked at that baby bird, feeling sorry, and then left the room. The ‘kkyak kkyak’ sounds started up again noisily.

-Cheep cheep cheep

He wasn’t there.

-Chirp cheep!

He wasn’t there. He didn’t come even when it called. The □□□ flapped and stood up again. If he wasn’t there, then it should find him.

-Chirp!

Dad! The □□□ yelled with all its might. And it dragged out it's lacking strength and exerted itself. If Han Yoojin had checked the □□□'s status window right now in this place, he would've been able to see a surprising change.

The '□□□□□□ Achieve after growth',

Switched into 'Ruler of Space(L)'.

-Chirp!!

And,

-...Chirp

It failed. As expected, it was lacking. It had also gotten hungry. Extremely so.

-Chirp... chirp chirp chirp!!

The status window went back to how it was originally, and the □□□ started to cry sadly.

Chapter 77: < Hatchling Class Teacher (4) >

< Hatchling Class Teacher (4) >

"I had looked forward to it a lot because I had heard that what Hunter Yoo Myeongwoo had made was an S-Rank spear. Of course, it's not like I don't have an S-Rank giant spear, but it's good to have one more as a spare. It's uneasy if you only have one of your main weapon. It's not like it won't ever break just because it's an S-Rank weapon."

Moon Hyuna said, lightly jumping over the building wreckage.

The second day of the dungeon attack was also smooth and leisurely. Maybe thanks to the Yoo Myeongwoo effect, they growled at each much less, unlike yesterday. Of course, it wasn't to the point of laughter and amicability, but they didn't try to butt heads and fight.

"And if the weapon options are different, it can change your combat style. I am a bit simple. It's not much of a trouble yet against monsters, but if it's against a human who can know my information ahead of time, it's annoying."

Then she glanced at the direction Sung Hyunjae had gone.

"So can't hyung-nim secretly nudge Hunter Yoo Myeongwoo a bit? Like 'how about an

S-Rank giant spear as the next weapon’.”

“Unni, I’m more urgent!”

Yerim, who was sitting leaning against my back, suddenly shouted. It was a position where her legs were stretched out toward Peace’s butt, which looked uneasy because she might fall, but the person herself was incredibly relaxed.

“Unni already has all S-Rank equipment, but I only have the spear and a bracelet, okay?”

“That Haeyeon Guild Leader is stingy. Ah, I’m not criticizing your younger brother. It’s good to be frugal.”

“It is not that he is frugal, but that their aptitudes are exact opposites and even their combat styles are different, so there were not enough things that suited Yerim.”

Yoohyun was in the center of close-range combat based on overflowing flame power. Because he characteristically didn’t have any lacking places and had all-round outstanding stats and skills, he was stronger in a one on one situation against a particular strong person, rather than many. On the other hand, Yerim was focused on Mana and Agility. And her skills were specialized in quickly binding many enemies and sweeping them away.

Their aptitudes and types were exact opposites, so there was no choice but for there to be only a few that Yerim could use among the S-Rank equipment that Haeyeon possessed. She

wouldn't be going into an S-Rank dungeon right away, so rather than S-Rank equipment with wrong options, A-Rank equipment that fit her characteristics well was better.

"That is true. Did you know that all the of equipment in Haeyeon, really, if the rank is just a little high, then it's thickly layered with flame resistance? Did they say that if you were going to go into an S-Rank dungeon with Guild Leader, you needed a C-Rank flame resistance at minimum? If you were going to be close by, then you need B. Or a defense specialization."

"Yerim, if you're going to make your team, you should probably be gathering equipment with cold resistance starting now. It's not other people's business."

"Ahhh, that's true! That's right, shit!"

The road of suffering was clear for our Yerim. Still, as long as she properly had an S-Rank team, it would be smooth sailing. The level of difficulty for dungeons would go up, but if I could stick her with Moon Hyuna, there wouldn't be anything to worry about. The keyword hadn't been applied yet, probably.

[Influence completed targets(7)]

(Han Yoohyun-S)(Bak Yerim-S)(Peace-S)(Standby)(Standby)

.....

(Yoo Myeongwoo-A)(Kim Sunghan-A)(Chirpie-□)(Blue-C)]

As expected, Moon Hyuna's name wasn't there. Peace had gone up to the S-Rank line, and Yoo Myeongwoo changed into an A-Rank. It seemed like if the skill was SS and the stats were C, you were A in the point of view of the system. When Myeongwoo also became stat B or A, he would probably also go up to S-Rank.

The keyword application for Blue was faster than I would've thought. Maybe because the unicorns stayed apart, I thought it would take quite some time for them.

'Moon Hyuna has gotten quite close, so it would probably work if I say the keyword one or two more times. For Sung Hyunjae... well, if there's a chance.'

I had sloppily said it once, but he wasn't an easy person to do the love ballad to. Besides Chirpie, if you said all were S-Rank, that would be six, and if you added Moon Hyuna, then seven. It hadn't even been two months since I got the My Brat skill, so it was an okay speed.

'I should apply the keyword to Moon Hyuna before going out of the dungeon.'

It was just then.

[Avoid it! Space interferen]

An urgent message popped up, and a weird feeling came over my whole body. Specifically, I felt like something was being distorted where I was.

A chill went through my spine and,

[Fear over a powerful existence has disappeared!]

The Fear Resistance skill message appeared. Along with my body, which had frozen slightly, loosening, I yelled.

“We have get out of here! Peace, run!”

-Keuheung!

As if answering, Peace shouted and increased his speed. Yerim, who had yelled and fallen off, and Moon Hyuna, as well as Kim Sunghan, immediately followed after us.

“What’s the matter, ahjussi?”

Yerim flew over quickly and asked. Could other people not feel it?

“Yoohyun, and Sung Hyunjae, ugh, tell them, to come over to our side!”

I said, almost biting my tongue several times from the trembling. Yerim answered and disappeared in an instant. And shortly after,

Gugugugeungeung!

I heard a noise like a mountain collapsing behind me. It wasn't just once, but several times in succession.

“Crazy! What is that?!”

Moon Hyuna shouted, alarmed. Shit, if it was enough to alarm an S-Rank, then it definitely wouldn't be a normal situation. When I patted Peace's back, he luckily noticed and stopped. I swallowed a breath and turned around.

In the middle of the half-destroyed city, a mountain had shot up.

No, it was an extra-large monster that was like a small mountain. The raised head was extremely high. Under the thick four feet, the broken buildings looked insignificant like toy blocks.

A giant toad whose whole body was covered in boulders.

[1st Rank Giant Toad Type – Mountain Swallowing Babar[1]

Current Stat Rank SS

Possible Awakening Stat Rank S~SS

Optimized Initial Skills

Small Mountain(SS) Acquired

Endless Digestive Power(SS) Acquired

Melting Venom(S) Acquisition failure

Regeneration(S) Acquired]

It was an SS-Rank 1st Rank monster.

Kureureung koong!

The Babar moved slowly. The speed was slow like it was crawling, but because it was considerably large, each step swept away dozens of buildings. Like an earthquake was happening, the ground trembled.

That appearance like a small mountain was moving, didn't feel realistic.

Thankfully, the direction was opposite to us, and the distance was far enough. When I came down from Peace's back, I went toward Kim Sunghan and Moon Hyuna. Both of them had frozen expressions.

"Wow crap, this is my first time seeing something like that. Has Yerim or Hunter Kim Sunghan see it before?"

"This is my first time as well."

"Me too. It's really huge!"

"Is it really a monster? How do you catch something like that?"

Moon Hyuna shook her head as if overwhelmed. Still, the Babar was on the easy side of catching among the 1st rank monsters, if you knew the method. That guy hadn't even gotten the venom, so it was even more handle-able.

For the S-Ranks 5 years later, that is.

“Hyung!”

Yoohyun, who had appeared in no time, said, coming close to my side.

“First, it’s better for hyung to go out.”

“Are there enough gate stones for the number of people?”

“...No. Haeyeon only has three, and I only brought one.”

Including mine, it was two.

“I only have one, too.”

Moon Hyuna said. Sung Hyunjae should be in a similar situation. And using a gate stone and going out was also a problem. Since I didn’t know if a monster from an error would quietly disappear.

If the dungeon burst open with the Babar there, it would be chaos. This dungeon was right next to Y Uni[2]. A horrible situation like the entire area of Y Uni being swept away could happen.

‘I don’t know what the space interference was, but first, there’s no choice but to handle that first.’

It wasn’t that there was no method. Just then, Sung Hyunjae arrived with Yerim.

“Is this phenomenon like the Gold Beak Maiya appearing in the D-Rank dungeon that time?”

At Sung Hyunjae’s words, Yoohyun’s gaze reflexively went towards me. I didn’t know if this time was also related to me. Specifically, this abnormality had appeared where I was, so it probably wasn’t that there was no relation at all.

“That monster is a 1st Rank Giant Toad type, a Mountain Swallowing Babar. The stat rank is SS.”

“1st rank? Stat SS? Why would that kind of fiend come out of an A-Rank dungeon? I’ve never seen it in even an S-Rank dungeon!”

Moon Hyuna frowned and Yoohyun’s and Kim Sunghan’s expression froze stiffly. Yerim seemed like she hadn’t grasped the situation yet.

“Let’s to straight to the gate, hyung.”

“Yes, please go out first.”

What were you going to do if I went out? Even if the remaining people also used gate stones, Yerim and Kim Sunghan, and if the monster counted then that, as well as Peace would be shut in.

“There’s no need to worry right away. Since it won’t be able to notice over here until we attack.”

Most monsters were belligerent, so they would come at you first, but that guy was different. Even if little humans loitered right in front of it, it couldn’t notice very well.

It was obtuse and slow. But it was extremely strong.

The dungeon in China where the Babar had first appeared, couldn’t be attacked and burst open in the end. That giant toad just slowly roamed around, but even with that, there was immense damage.

Thanks to that, it appeared several times in broadcasts, so I clearly remembered the attack

method.

Right now and here, there was all the skills that were needed to attack the Babar. Thankfully.

“The Babar’s skin is incredibly strong. Ordinary skills cannot ever break it.”

That was the same even for the 5 years later S-Ranks. 1st rank monster types were things that you couldn’t handle by yourself.

“Even so, the place where the skin is thin is the back of the neck region where it is sunken in. It is directly connected to the head, so it can be called the sole vital point.”

“How do you know what? Does that kind of information come from the magic beast rearing skill?”

Sung Hyunjae asked. I couldn’t say, ‘I saw it in the future’.

“More or less. Please focus on the attack right now. If we cannot catch that guy before we leave, there will be chaos.”

I spoke evasively and turned my gaze to Yerim.

“Yerim, you’re first.”

“Sorry? For what?”

“Even if the back of the neck is the weakest, if you don’t weaken the skin, you can’t break it. The most effective way to weaken the Babar’s skin is to give a rapid difference in temperature.”

And right now, there was fire and ice, both of them here.

“Shadowless Day’s stat buff to Mana, attribute buff to combat skills[3]. Add Pale Rain to Sigh and focus them locally to freeze it. And don’t forget the ice aptitude reinforcement. After that is you, Yoohyun.”

“You mean melt it with maximum high temperature, right?”

“You got it. And Hyuna-ssi. Please break the weakened skin along with Peace! I have heard that Hyuna-ssi is the best at gathering destructive power to one point.”

“That’s my specialty! If it’s a guy that’s that slow, then it’s even easier.”

Moon Hyuna said cheerfully. She smirked and even turned to look at Peace.

“It doesn’t seem like it ends with Moon Hyuna, so is the last one me?”

“Yes, Hyunjae-ssi. Once Hyuna-ssi breaks the skin, the flesh will be exposed. If you hurl down a powerful current, even the brain will be fried, but with your current stats, it will probably not be enough. However, if you add Yerim’s stat attribute buff, and receive attack skill effect doubling, you can definitely end it.”

I had already told the people here that I could share my attack skill effect doubling title. It was because they would be able to notice while Kim Sunghan was catching the boss, and afterwards, if I had to share, the possibility of the other person being an S-Rank was high.

“Does hyung have to be active too?”

Yoohyun immediately frowned. I also didn’t want to be active, but thinking of the difference of 5 years, I was uneasy with a stat attribute 30, 20% increase. The difference in, of course levels and stats and proficiency in skills, but even equipment should be big.

“I have the bracelet. It’s enough with 10 minutes. No, if it passes 10 minutes, then it would be failure. One of the skills that the Babar has is an S-Rank regeneration. Its recuperative power should definitely be high, so since it also has regeneration, if the connection between the attacks are even a little delayed, it should recover in an instant.”

Then, the method wouldn’t work. Another try was possible for the other people, but I was

one-time-use. So, I had to use the bracelet at the very last second, the point when I thought we would succeed.

Timing was important in various ways.

‘Terrifying Hatchling Class Teacher, should I use that?’

The skill that had suddenly popped up in the morning. It was probably the one I couldn’t get at 10 levels, that was acquired because the conditions were satisfied.

I didn’t know what the conditions were, but the skill rank was like that, and with the situation, it would probably be related to S-Ranks. Wouldn’t it have been ‘leading more than a certain number of S-Rank Hunters’, or something scary like that?

...If it really was, it didn’t seem to be a skill you should earn.

I opened my status window and checked the skill again.

[Terrifying Hatchling Class Teacher(SS) – A teacher who leads Awakened People however they like! The kids really do not listen and act however they like, right? But do not worry! If you use this skill, the many targets can deeply connect, and form a close cooperation centered on the skill user

Target rank limit – SS]

Even if you just glanced at it, you could tell that the person who was writing the explanation window changed in the middle. The image of Water Droplet or possibly Tree smacking the back of Deer bastard's head and filling out the explanation window, was vivid in my mind. Though they were people whose faces I didn't even know.

[※Affects Mental and Mana. The more outstanding the targets' abilities are, the higher the possibility of the burden on the skill user increasing. In the case of keyword-applied people, the burden is expected to be less. If the target strongly refuses, a blow to the skill user can occur. There can be other effects]

Most of it were guesses, but still, they detailedly explained. They really were kind.

'Looking at the skill name and explanation, it seems to be a chain of command special skill.'

The part that said that a close cooperation was possible was especially alluring in this situation.

While against the Babar with the outstanding regeneration, the most important thing was none other than a fast and precise connection between each skill. You couldn't be caught up in an ally's skill, and had to hit it with the next attack as fast as possible.

The first team that successfully hunted the Babar also didn't mesh well and had to pass

through trial and error several times.

If the Teacher skill displayed the effect exactly as it was in the explanation, it would be incredibly useful.

“Is there anybody who has Mental and Mana prioritized integer increase equipment?”

“I have ratio increase.”

Yerim said. The other people also shook their heads. That’s right, of course they wouldn’t have any. I took out one by one the ones I had at least and put them on. It was a relief that there were a lot of cases where the Mana and Mental stats were paired together.

“Peace, look at this! It’s an S-Rank saddle!”

Moon Hyuna took out a black and white saddle from her inventory. At the person filled with evil intentions striding over, Peace stepped back towards me.

-Geureung

“Endure it just this time.”

“Endure it – do you know how good this is! Speed reinforcement is basic, and it has Strength-Stamina increase as well as defense, and it improves rushing power, and even raises the passenger’s attack power!”

“Hyuna-ssi, do you not have any flame resistance equipment? You are after Yoohyun, so you will need to prepare.”

“I don’t know when I have to go up against him, so of course I have some. I brought them.”

She really had a lot of will to fight.

While people were taking care of their own equipment, I saw Kim Sunghan separated on his own. There wasn’t a part that he could be stuck into, but I couldn’t just leave him alone.

“Is there someone with a long range weapon?”

“Me!”

Moon Hyuna shot her hand up. What she took out of her inventory and tossed over was a longbow.

“Is the range long?”

“Extremely. I even use it for signals.”

I took the bow and went to Kim Sunghan to give it to him,

“Please try shooting once and stand back.”

With this kind of bow, the toad wouldn't even feel ticklish, but that wasn't the important part. One of Kim Sunghan's S-Rank growth conditions was exactly hunting an SS-Rank monster with less than 10 people. Even including Peace, it was seven, so it fit the condition.

“Will it be okay? Just because of me...”

Kim Sunghan had an expression like he was so sorry he could die. Though truthfully, the toad appearing was probably because of me.

“Please do not mind it. These kinds of things can happen. If you really feel indebted, then please assist my brother well from now on. Like how you have until now.”

With growing him into an S-Rank, the contract time had already increased, but people's hearts were like that. Rather than tying him down by force, asking him with a requesting tone would create a bigger drive.

“Naturally I will do so. Please do not worry.”

Kim Sunghan said, gripping the bow.

Organizing the equipment was done. The Babar had opened its large mouth and was eating the castle. Kwareureu, kwareung, the sound of bricks pouring down was heard loudly even here.

“Even if we go up onto behind its neck, it will not move a bit. You can see it as there being no sensation on the skin.”

Unless it was a considerable shock, it couldn't feel anything.

“Then we should go up first.”

At Moon Hyuna's words, Yerim stretched out both her arms at me.

“Here, come over, ahjussi!”

“...Huh?”

“That’s seriously steep, so if you go up riding Peace, unless you tie your body down, you’ll probably fall down? With my flight skill, I’m the best. I will safely and comfortably escort you there~.”

She was right, but it was a little embarrassing to hang onto a young girl smaller than me. I went toward her wondering if I should hang on her back, when,

“Ah, wait!”

Yerim swept me up into her arms. Woah crap, Yerim!

“Please stay still, ahjussi.”

“You don’t have to go this far?!”

“This should be the most comfortable and safe. Ahjussi is really light, so please don’t worry and leave yourself to me.”

No, the weight wasn’t the problem..... the back of my neck burned. Ugh, embarrassing.

[1] lit. it’s more like ‘babar that swallowed (a) mountain(s)’ but that’s too long and also sounds weird as a name. Also, again I guessed with the name, it could also be ‘bavar’ or sth else. It’s ‘bah-bah-reu’

[2] as in university. The krn also uses an abbrev, so I followed suit w the tl

[3] not sure abt this, bc he uses a word that has a lot of diff meanings but normally means like 'electricity' or 'biography' or 'previous time period', all of which makes no sense. So I'm assuming it's a made up word composed of 전(戰/fight) and 기(技/skill) because that seems to make the most sense.

Chapter 78: < Hatchling Class Teacher (5) >

< Hatchling Class Teacher (5) >

"It's a pity that camera phones don't work in a dungeon."

Yerim said, placing me down. What now about camera phones? Did she want to take a picture since it was the first SS-Rank monster that appeared?

Because she flew over slowly in case I couldn't handle it, the other four had already arrived at the Babar's back. The large back that was made up of rocks barely had any tremors and it really felt like we had gone up to a mountainside.

"There really isn't any reaction?"

Moon Hyuna said, hitting the ground with the tip of her foot.

“Because it is the same as flies landing on top of padding. Even so, please do not immediately poke it with a spear.”

At my words, Moon Hyuna stopped raising her spear and lowered it. Anyways, you couldn't be careless.

“Where is Kim Sunghan-ssi?”

The toad's back was so wide that it was hard to search below. Yerim floated up a bit and looked around before answering.

“Seeing how he's taking the bow and going further away, it seems he has already shot it.”

“Really? Then...”

Even if it felt unnatural, I had to apply the keyword to Moon Hyuna.

The Teacher skill said that the higher the target's abilities, the bigger the burden could be. But there were five only S-Ranks, here. So it would be safer to lessen the burden through the keyword application.

“Hyuna-ssi, please take good care of our Peace. He does not have experience as a kiseungsu, and this is basically his first dungeon.”

I said to Moon Hyuna, going towards her. I actually was worried. I didn’t know he would have to go up against a monster stronger than him this fast.

“Don’t worry, this kid’s dad. There’ll be no problem as long as Peace follows well.”

“Even your words are reliable.”

When I purposely put on a forced smile that showed that it was feigned, Moon Hyuna’s face looked displeased, as expected.

“If you’re uneasy, then openly say that you’re uneasy. Anyways, hyung-nim doesn’t trust only me.”

“...Does it show that much?”

I continued, sheepishly.

“Truthfully, I do feel uneasy. But it is definitely not that I cannot trust Hyuna-ssi. Rather, you

are reliable, and I am grateful. I worried quite a lot before coming into the dungeon. You know as well, that all of you are people that I cannot go up against.”

If I was a normal stat F without fear resistance, I might have gotten stomach cramps from the stress by now.

“For Haeyeon Guild, I know them well and spend time with them normally, so I can be relieved, but I could not help but wonder if the other two people would be okay, with the way I am. But, Hyuna-ssi was much kinder than I expected, and listened to my opinions well, so I could quickly be at ease. If I have carelessly treated you too casually, and possibly offended you, then I apologize.”

“Ah, was there anything that went so far as being offensive? Treat me casually. It’s okay.”

She smiled and stretched out a hand to mess up my hair. If you counted before the regression, I was older, though.

“If you really are grateful, then lend me the gryphon often. How about letting me use it exclusively until I find a highest rank kiseungsu?”

“That is a little difficult. Instead, I will give you my earnest feelings. I love you, Moon Hyuna-ssi. Please take care of me from now on.”

“I’m a little sad since it’s just your feelings. But I’ll overlook it since it’s hyung-nim.”

Then her expression became a little strange.

“Hyung-nim scolding me, surprisingly wasn’t unpleasant. Was it because I thought of my sunbae-nim? You do seem a bit similar.”

When she said ‘sunbae-nim’, I thought that it must’ve worked without me having to check the status window. She was probably talking about a sunbae while she was an athlete, or possibly in a sports club at school. It was highly likely it was a female sunbae-nim, but if it was that level, it wasn’t bad. As long as it wasn’t ‘mother’.

Sunbae-nim whose name I don’t know, thank you for looking after Moon Hyuna-ssi well.

After soothing Peace, asking him to keep in sync with Moon Hyuna just this once, I used the My Brat growth buff on Yoohyun. After catching the SS-Rank monster and going out, he would quickly go into an S-Rank dungeon, so using it on him now was perfect.

“I will use a skill starting from now.”

As soon as I spoke, the gazes gathered on me. They were so focused on me that it was to the point of feeling a little burdened.

“The skill I earned this morning is a type of chain of command special skill. This is my first

time using it, so I cannot know the specifics of the effect yet, but according to the explanation window, it will assist the people the skill is applied to, in closely cooperating. The most important thing right now is a precise and fast connection between each skill, so I think it will be of help.”

“A skill appeared this morning?”

“Yeah. It’s probably the one I didn’t get at 20 levels, and appeared because the conditions were achieved. Wouldn’t it have to do with several S-Rank Hunters gathered together?”

Specifically, I thought it was the 10 level skill, but externally, it became that my 10 level skill was the magic beast rearing, so let’s put it as the 20 level. At any rate, the 20 level skill didn’t appear either.

“It seems like ahjussi really doesn’t have even a little bit of a combat-related aptitude.”

Yerim said something agonizing. Alright, anyways I was stat F-Rank. Even if there was a good attack skill, even if the effect was doubled, in the eyes of the people here, at the most it would seem like a mouse becoming a cat.

A special skill that was less affected by stat was better.

I told them the precaution that they shouldn't reject it, and then used the skill on Yoohyun first. Along with the skill being applied, I 'understood' Han Yoohyun's movements. That also included one foot forward, up to his strength's adjustment.

Han Yoohyun's mouth opened. No, it was going to open.

"I don't really feel anything yet. What about hyung?"

Instead of replying, I used the skill on Yerim too. When I did, even without looking at the bright gaze my way, I could feel it. Yoohyun was also looking at me.

If you included mine, I could sense three gazes.

'Was this why the Mental stat was necessary?'

It was dizzying, but maybe because of the skill compensation, or possibly the keyword compensation, it was still okay. But it seemed like it would be hard to handle if the number increased.

And I could transmit these sensations that I was feeling toward the people the skill was applied to.

Unilaterally, and in both directions, too.

“I’ll start to connect the two people starting now.”

If this was transmitted like this, it seemed like it would actually be a hindrance during battle; how would it be?

“Huh? This is interesting?”

Yerim said, widening her eyes. Yoohyun also seemed surprised.

“To think that I can feel how the other person will move. It’ll definitely be the best for working together.”

“You don’t think it’ll be a hindrance? Like the sensations becoming confusing.”

“No, not at all. It’s stably divided, so there won’t be concerns over it mixing.”

It seemed like it was different from me. Could I be acting as a type of filter? Working the user to the bone and increasing the targets’ cooperativity?

‘...It’s being a normal kindergarten teacher.’

Especially the suffering teacher trying to get the kids to match the dance routine during the school talent show[1] season. And speaking of, when Yoohyun was in kindergarten, he was in the hatchling class.

“Try it on me, too!”

Like she wanted, I used the skill on Moon Hyuna, and then Peace. When it became four, I slowly became mentally exhausted. I was also slightly dizzy. It seemed like I couldn’t use it for long.

“Yerim!”

Clang!

Moon Hyuna’s giant white spear and Yerim’s Ice Wood spear smacked against each other. If it was as usual, Yerim would’ve been pushed away in an instant, but the two spears that were clearly different in width and length, like how their owner’s strengths were clearly different, stopped in the middle right as they just touched. There wasn’t even a little bit of a tremble.

It meant that the two people’s strength distribution was precise enough to give you goosebumps.

“Wow, this works in one go.”

“It really does! Ahjussi, can’t you just go around the dungeon with me?”

Are you trying to kill me?

Now only Sung Hyunjae was left. The person without the keyword applied and with the best abilities among the people here. Ah, I really didn’t think I would be able to handle it.

‘He’s the most important last blow so it’s not like I can just not use it on him.’

It was the Babar that wouldn’t have much on a reaction up to Yoohyun. But it was obvious that once Moon Hyuna broke the skin, it would immediately try to recover and use its regeneration skill.

“Is there some problem?”

Sung Hyunjae, who had come up behind me when I wasn’t noticing, asked. He was asking why I wasn’t using the skill on him.

“Let me drink a potion first.”

I still had more than half of mana left, but just in case, I should fill it up. I took out the

disgusting apple-flavored potion and gulped it down. I had inquired about custom potions at the Association, but they said special treatment was impossible. Inflexible people.

Then I used the skill.

‘.....It’s endurable.’

Compared to someone the keyword was applied to, the sense of burden that I felt was definitely bigger. But still, about 1.5 times as much? If it was this much it wasn’t ba...

“How interesting.”

In an instant, along with the feeling of my entire body roughly trembling, my vision grew dizzy. As the strength left my legs, Sung Hyunjae grabbed my arm and helped me stay up.

Fuck, Sung Hyunjae, son of a bitch.....

“Didn’t I say, not to reject it?”

“I just tried lightly bothering it, though.”

He replied with a shameless face. If I said not to do it, then don't do it. Did the burden being bigger for people the keyword isn't applied to, include this? The other people, even Moon Hyuna, were all well-behaved, but just this bastard was pulling crap.

"Is there something wrong?"

Yoohyun came over, glaring at Sung Hyunjae, the hand that was holding my arm. Anyways, Sung Hyunjae, this damn bastard. He was the oldest person here and yet he was stirring up trouble.

"It's nothing. I just got a little dizzy because the number of skill targets increased."

"You're really okay?"

"I'm fine."

If the crooked person next to me just stayed still, it was endurable. Just then, Sung Hyunjae, who had been taking off his coat, hung it over my shoulders.

"It has an S-Rank flame resistance, so wear it. Since young master's skill will have the biggest impact. The defense power is usable, too."

"I have the bracelet, so I am okay."

“If I were you, I wouldn’t use it until the success of the hunt was certain, but am I wrong?”

He was correct. Still, why didn’t you say it while Yoohyun wasn’t here? Look at him, his eyes were getting fierce again.

“Hyung?”

“I mean, if need be, I have the shielding earring, and I can only use it once... I’ll wear the coat.”

I slowly slipped my arms into the sleeves. The loose width and the sleeves that covered my hands shrunk to fit me perfectly.

‘I want to take it and bolt.’

If he didn’t have this, later during the ranking competitions, Yoohyun would suffer less. It probably wouldn’t work if I acted crazy and stuck it in my inventory.

“I’ll use the bracelet matching the timing, so don’t worry.”

That little brother turned around with a still sullen face. Once we got out of the dungeon, I

should somehow pacify him; like that, he'd burst again.

Just then, I felt Yerim spreading out Shadowless Day.

"The preparations are all ready!"

Right afterwards, Sung Hyunjae held me with one arm. It was impossible for me to hang on during battle with my arm strength, so there was no choice, but still, it was upsetting.

I was luggage. Just Luggage A.

"I will share the skill, so please don't take it off."

I used One More as a Freebie(S), the skill that let me share an S-Rank and under skill title with somebody else through contact, with Sung Hyunjae as the target. The skill to be shared was Veteran F-Rank(S). It was the attack skill effect doubling title.

Sung Hyunjae took out the Refined Seeker's Chains from his inventory. The gold chains the width of a finger writhed like snakes swimming in the air and circled the surroundings. The powerful electric energy it carried occasionally sparked and sparkled.

Right now, my gaze wasn't necessary, so I closed my eyes. And I wanted to decrease at least one part of the data pushing through.

A powerful mana field was spread over the center of the Babar's back neck that was like a cliff.

Shadowless Day.

Bak Yerim was floating over the domain that she was ruling. She was always self-confident like that. Even in front of an opponent that she couldn't properly hurt with her power, she was having fun.

The Ice Wood Spear's ice attribute reinforcement skill was evoked. A powerful chill that would even freeze breaths that haven't been breathed out yet, started to overflow.

If she hadn't raised her levels yesterday and gotten the cold resistance, the user also could've suffered damage.

Sareureuk

Cold Sigh covered the area like a veil. The fog that was originally white was tinged with vivid blue from the Mana that was pulled up as much as possible and the ice attribute reinforcement.

Above that.

Swaaa-!

Frozen rain poured down.

The range was narrowed as much as possible, and instead of rain, ice fog that was thick as spear blades whirled around and struck down.

Jjaak- Jjuuk!

The temperature that rapidly went down.

Without time to check the results she created, Yerim's body disappeared.

Almost at the same time as that, immediately swallowing up the place where Yerim was-

Kwagwagwagwa!

Was a blaze pouring out like a furious wave.

The frozen rock wall melted in an instant. It heated up into a bright red. The color of the flames greedily gnawing away above that, quickly deepened.

From red-purple to dark purple, and finally a complete black.

Thanks to the flame resistance, I didn't feel any heat, but it was an extremely high temperature that would block your breath with just the conveyed data.

"Isn't now just right?!"

Even though the risk data that she wouldn't be able to handle it was sent, Moon Hyuna was impatient over not being able to rush in. That personality.

Of course, it was probably the softest now, but if the spearman that had to break it couldn't bring out her strength due to burns, she would be useless.

The amount that Moon Hyuna could handle. A certain level of damage was allowed. She was sturdy enough, so there was no need to wait long. Only a short moment was needed.

Charging speed, distance, the remaining time for the flames, I felt a little like I was going to throw up. My head was already a mess.

Right now.

Kkadeudeuk-

Strength went into Peace's four legs. The claws that came out scratched the ground.

At the same time the jockey and kiseungsu who were completely in tune powerfully kicked off the ground, I used the bracelet's skill. In order for Sung Hyunjae to pour out electric shocks right after the tip of Moon Hyuna's spear broke the skin, he had to move right now too.

Without having to speak outloud, Sung Hyunjae's feet moved.

Right afterwards,

Kwaang-!

I heard an ear-piercing explosive sound. As debris sprayed out, the end of the spear dug into the Babar's skin like a giant drill, with that enormous vigor.

Her clothes were burned and her hands and face were partly festered red, but Moon Hyuna was smiling. She was really excited. Opposite to her,

-Gureureuk

The giant toad finally reacted. As if taken aback, it let out a sound like a mountain rumbling and moved its body. The half-broken castle was completely collapsed down. It would probably use the regeneration soon, but it was already too late.

The flesh was exposed. The flesh that was covered in dark green bodily fluid that had spurted out from the fierce spear piercing even a thick vein.

Moon Hyuna and Peace quickly moved back without regret. With precise timing, Sung Hyunjae finished the preparation.

Charararak

The Seeker's Chains that had voraciously taken up its owner's Mana, spread out wide and,

Kwak! Kwadeuk!

Flew like arrows and drove into the Babar's flesh.

Kooreureung!

Lightning bolts poured down from above to those perfect lightning rods.

Pale lights flashed, and painted the view bright white. The smell of meat burning. Debris started to fly again.

The enormously destructive electric shock didn't relent and poured down like a deluge. The thick flesh that was hard to pierce with normal physical force, burned and boiled up, and its surroundings melted stickily. The white bone was briefly exposed, and then even that also burned black.

As if to gobble up the giant body altogether, the electric current spread in one breath.

-Goouuung!

The Babar screamed as it twisted its body. It was mixed with the sound of something collapsing and the sound of the ground reverberating. At the enormous build floundering, even the air trembled.

But that struggle didn't last long.

-Gooooong!

Along with the loud roar of the death throes, the mountain collapsed down. The skin that

was firmly stuck to the Babar's entire body lost its cohesiveness and fell off.

It was literally a landslide.

After checking that everyone had safely avoided the boulders falling like rain, I turned off the Teacher skill.

I was taken aback by my vision growing dark in an instant, and lifted up my eyelids. But I couldn't hold out for long and closed them again. It seemed like the reward window had popped up, but I didn't even have the energy to check.

'I feel like I'm going to die, really.'

It was a feeling like my soul was plucked out and put into a juicer and squeezed to the end.

"...I will close my eyes a little, so please do not fight."

Take the kids and end the dungeon attack well, as benefiting the eldest, please. I was uneasy, but I fell asleep as if passing out.

[1] the word used means more like 'party/celebration where young kids show cute behaviors

to adults' but there isn't a good equiv to that in eng, so the closest thing I could think of was a school/kindergarten talent show or play

Chapter 79: < Don't Make Trouble >

< Don't Make Trouble >

"Peace! You're the best! Oh this pretty thing! Won't you come to noona? Hm? Hm? Or is it unni?"

Hanging onto the Horned Flame Lion's neck, Moon Hyuna was yelling like a tipsy drunkard. Peace shook his neck as if annoyed, but she didn't budge an inch and laughed loudly.

The air was thick with dirt and dust. Mounds of rocks were piled up and strewn about around the giant toad's corpse.

In between that, Han Yoohyun and Bak Yerim were staring sourly at each other.

They were two people who instinctively avoided each other because their dispositions didn't match. But the moment Han Yoojin's skill was applied, that unpleasantness completely disappeared.

What filled that empty space was a light bond and sense of closeness.

There should've been a repulsion, but accepting those feelings was because of the connecting person in the middle, who was none other than Han Yoojin.

It was a type of deception.

Han Yoohyun and Bak Yerim were sufficiently used to sending and receiving positive feelings to and from Han Yoojin. Enough to not notice that that obvious flow was very slightly twisted.

"...Let's not say anything, the two of us."

Bak Yerim said, with the corners of her eyes slightly wrinkled.

The skill effect had disappeared, but the residual feelings were still remaining. They had started to be annoyed by the other party, but the good feeling of a bond from being in sync was still the same.

Especially for Bak Yerim, this was her first time meeting a mighty enemy and pouring out as much of her strength as possible in combat. It was exciting and fun and thrilling. Even now, with the results of that laid out under her feet, her heart was still pounding, and Han Yoohyun, who had been an eyesore, even looked nice. Though she didn't want to acknowledge it and it felt bad.

The level was less so for Han Yoohyun, but he was in a similar situation, so he bitterly

nodded his head.

But the one who had been affected the most, more than Moon Hyuna, who had been completely in tune with a highest rank kiseungsu, and Han Yoohyun and Bak Yerim, who had felt weird emotions in their rivalry, was none other than Sung Hyunjae.

The dead giant toad's back neck was completely dug up.

The wound's size was enormous, but bodily fluids corresponding to blood didn't flow. It was because, of course the wound region, but even inside of that was cooked through as if boiled.

A mark like an extra large beast of a similar size to the Babar had torn into it, instead of a small human. Sung Hyunjae looked at that, and then lowered his gaze toward the young man he was holding.

"Where could something like this have popped out of?"

He quietly mumbled, as if fascinated. It was a tone like he had discovered a new type of lifeform that was incredibly interesting.

He had already known of Han Yoojin's usefulness. But raising kiseungsu or knowing expected Awakening ranks were all areas he didn't need to directly influence.

Since the targets that should receive it wasn't Han Yoojin, but his harvest.

It might have been different if Haeyeon or a different guild had tried to monopolize him, but Han Yoojin was being neutral, so it was enough with maintaining a good enough relationship. There was no reason to purposely bother a farmer who was working well on his own. A contract was already signed, and he just needed to receive the excellent harvest.

But now the situation had changed.

A chain of command special skill. Except for an exceptional case like this time, it was a skill that wasn't very necessary for an S-Rank Hunter yet.

'But it won't be far before the day it becomes important comes.'

Sung Hyunjae had known before anybody else, accurately, that the dungeons' level of difficulty was increasing. He was expecting cooperation between S-Rank Hunters to become essential in not that long of a time.

When that time came, a command skill that influenced even S-Rank Hunters would become the most important. Not just that, it was appealing that the skill user's stats were low.

There was no Hunter who welcomed someone who could threaten them, directly interfering

with them physically and mentally. But Han Yoojin was weak enough to not be even a little bit of a bother. And if you strongly rejected the skill, you could break it off.

It was to the point that sensitive high rank Hunters would think, 'Let's tolerantly accept him since he won't be harmful and is useful.' It was suitable to the point of wondering if it was matched on purpose.

And one more thing, sharing the doubled attack skill effect.

Sung Hyunjae's lips unconsciously formed a smile.

'The sensation is definitely different from just hearing it in words.'

There wouldn't be anybody who wouldn't find wielding a powerful strength appealing. And among that, force showed the fastest and most certain results, so you couldn't help but fall for it, once you stepped into it.

On top of that, for Hunters, there existed targets that they could legally exert violence towards, called monsters. And large rewards followed that.

You could wield inhuman strength as much as you wanted, and break and stomp on enemies and get even stronger.

A powerful body that you could control perfectly and highly pure mana that dominated the surroundings, and formed from those as a basis, skills beyond common sense with enormous destructive power. It was obvious that the higher rank the Hunter, the stronger the sense of freedom and pleasure was from combat.

The sensation of a doubled attack skill effect for somebody who was at the peak of those Hunters, was like a type of drug. It was different from when he just knew it was two times. It was to the point of feeling even fury at the truth that he had to throw away the strength he had already gotten a taste of and return to normal.

Why was this a human? If it was a dungeon item, he would've taken it no matter what he had to do.

"Is hyung alright?"

Just then, the four including Han Yoohyun came over.

"Naturally there is no injury, and he just fell asleep."

"That is a relief. Please hand him over."

Han Yoohyun held out his hands as if it was obvious. Sung Hyunjae unconsciously frowned.

If he passed over Han Yoojin like this, there was no way to promise when the next time could be. He knew well how excessively that young guy in front of him defended his hyung. Even if Han Yoojin said it was okay, there was no way he would send him obediently into a high rank dungeon.

‘Should I kill him?’

Of course Han Yoohyun, but the other guys too.

The attack skill effect doubling was still being shared. Even if he massacred the other S-Ranks here, the 1st Rank monster’s corpse and that reward was there, so there was enough excuses and evidence.

If it was like that, even the kiseungsu related contract would only have MKC and Hanshin remaining. MKC wouldn’t be able to put themselves forward properly, and Hanshin was at a level that was easy to step on. And the blacksmith couldn’t be a big threat yet.

“I asked you to return him.”

Maybe he had felt the serious mood, because Han Yoohyun’s expression hardened. Bak Yerim, who had left Peace and was teasing Moon Hyuna, also shut her mouth.

Chareureu

The Seeker's Chains wrapped around Sung Hyunjae as if protecting him. Looking at that, Han Yoohyun's eyes settled into a dark red.

"That's quite a scary gleam in your eyes. Are you going to come at me, young master?"

"Isn't it you who is picking a fight?"

"Yes, again. Didn't I send the signal starting from yesterday? I'm curious as to how much young master has grown."

"I would like to satisfy your expectations, but say it after you return hyung first."

"I don't want to."

Sung Hyunjae smiled. That growling was also cute. Bak Yerim's unenthusiastic voice suddenly cut through the tautly strained air.

"If the two of you fight like that, ahjussi will probably turn into about 50 pieces."

It was a tone like she was just throwing a rebuke, but the eyes of the person speaking was too cold for words. Next to her, Moon Hyuna spoke purposefully cheerfully.

“That’s right. So why don’t you pass hyung-nim over here and then fight? I’ll keep my mouth shut so the two of you do your own thing. I won’t tattle on you, I promise.”

“Unni, aren’t you being too obvious about telling a lie? You’re really thinking of watching the fight and then even profiting off that.”

Bak Yerim only smiled with her mouth and took out a mana potion. Moon Hyuna also stabbed the giant spear that she had previously put into her inventory, into the ground in front of her feet. Peace bared his canines a little, too. In the meantime, Kim Sunghan had also arrived. Looking around at the atmosphere, he didn’t ask and glared at Sung Hyunjae.

“Hm? Dear Hyunjae-ssi. Give the glass bead here. It’ll break after coming all the way to the last stretch.”

At Moon Hyuna’s words, Sung Hyunjae’s gaze went toward Han Yoojin, specifically that person’s wrist. He saw the cracked crude bracelet. It was a long time since 10 minutes had passed.

‘Moon Hyuna is a problem.’

The other three people, even the Horned Flame Lion, wouldn’t be able to attack properly due to the worry over Han Yoojin. But Moon Hyuna was different. It was obvious that she

would aim for Han Yoojin the moment she realized that the doubled attack skill effect was still applied.

‘And to properly use him, a special item will be necessary, too.’

When he thought like that, his head cooled.

“There’s so many eyes and mouths being noisy, so I guess there’s no choice.”

Speaking like he was quitting because it was annoying that he was going to get tattled on, Sung Hyunjae passed Han Yoojin over to Han Yoohyun. After draping on the coat he received back, he rested his eyes on the traces of the destruction that he had created, and then turned his gaze right away. Even if he continued to regret, he would only get dragged down.

“Okay, okay, let’s quickly finish and go out.”

When the situation was settled, Moon Hyuna waved her hand and spoke. Compared to the giant toad, only things about the level of a tadpole, no toad eggs, were left. There was no reason to drag it out.

“There is no doubt. It was aiming for Han Yoojin.”

Newcomer said, nervously. Next to him, Tree was recovering the number G-15 dungeon, Black Golem’s City. Through an air distortion, a 5 years later monster that had been blocked burst out. It happened to be that a lot of S-Rank Hunters were gathered, so a dangerous guy had appeared, suiting that. If it wasn’t quickly restored, similar things would happen in other dungeons.

“Could they have already noticed? What should we do with our Honey?”

“It’s not that so calm down. It was trying to bring over Han Yoojin, not kill him. And the location was within Honey’s world. Somebody must’ve used a teleportation skill.”

At Tree’s words, Newcomer’s expression briefly became brighter and then became dark again.

“Then could it be that side? Those guys trying to be filial?”

“Maybe. Since, at the least, it should’ve been an SSS-Rank skill, or highly likely an L-Rank skill. They shouldn’t be able to directly get involved yet, but we should check. There, done!”

Messages popped up on the window that had been pitch black dead.

“Ah, they have already caught the Babar! That was really fast!”

“That’s right. I thought they would’ve had a bit of a hard time with the current combat power. Honey also had a high level of contribution. The attack time was fast with a team including a stat F-Rank, too; the achievement amount should be considerable.”

The rewards for the dungeon attack and monster hunting were decided according to the achievement amount. Normally, the system automatically calculated it, but in exceptional cases, the administrators directly calculated and picked the rewards.

Tree moved their fingers around and connected appropriate rewards to each person.

“Finally, for our Honey – normal equipment should be useless.”

“It seemed like he needed high rank integer increase equipment, though?”

“There’s the blacksmith. He doesn’t need it. Rather than that... this should be good.”

After drawing out all the rewards amounts and connecting one special item, they turned off the window.

-Cheep cheep cheep chirp

Small mumbling tickled my ears. When I opened my eyes, I saw an unfamiliar ceiling. First of all, it seemed like we had left the dungeon

-Chirp! Chirp!

Next to my head, Chirpie flapped. Alright, alright. Stop hitting my face, it hurts.

“Ahjussi!”

“Yoojin!”

It was Yerim and Myeongwoo. I grabbed Chirpie and raised my body. Where was this place? It was a quite wide room without windows. And my clothes... seemed to be a hospital gown so was this a hospital?

When I turned to look, Myeongwoo was on the verge of tears.

“Did I sleep for long?”

“For two days! The hospital said that you were okay, but..... I mean even four S-Rank Hunters followed you in, but why couldn’t they protect a single person?!”

At Myeongwoo’s angry shout, Yerim looked away. I had been tired, but I didn’t know I would sleep for two days straight. Still, it seemed like there wasn’t anything weird about my body. And my head was clear.

Just then, the door opened and Kim Sunghan came in. When he saw me, he smiled brightly.

“So you have woken up!”

And then at Myeongwoo’s dirty look, he turned his head like Yerim.

Well, Myeongwoo was the person with power here. Especially for the two fledgling S-Ranks here, he was even more powerful. Of course Yerim, but even Kim Sunghan with quite a lot of experience, wouldn’t have much S-Rank equipment. S-Rank equipment wasn’t common yet, so S-Rank Hunters were prioritized in taking them.

For them to quickly get all the equipment they needed, the best way was to borrow Myeongwoo’s strength.

“Don’t be like that. Before the 1st Rank monster suddenly appeared, there wasn’t any

problem. Even if they are S-Rank Hunters, how could they have predicted such an abnormal thing and stopped it? And they all cooperatively hunted the 1st Rank monster well, too.”

Even after that, they probably finished the attack well without much of a problem, right? They wouldn’t have picked fights again and fought in that chaos.

“What about Blue?”

I asked, petting Chirpie.

“She was too noisy, so we couldn’t bring her to the hospital. She was a little sullen because she couldn’t see ahjussi, but she’s well. And she eats well too.”

“Chirpie kept on crying the whole day starting from the second day, so there was no helping it. We got permission from the hospital and Association and brought it over.”

So it was like that, our Chirpie. You wanted to see dad?

“Did Yoohyun go into a dungeon?”

“Ah, yes.”

Yerim replied a little sourly. Avoiding my eyes, it seemed like she was hiding something. And speaking of, why was Kim Sunghan here?

“Wasn’t Sunghan-ssi supposed to go as well?”

“Ah... that is.”

Kim Sunghan also avoided my gaze. What was it?

“And Peace?”

“Peace went along, but that is...”

Yerim hesitated and then continued.

“Guild Leader and Peace, just the two of them went.”

“.....Huh?”

For a moment, I didn’t really understand. So, the two of them, just the two of them..... My heart sank and the Fear Resistance skill message window popped up. Crazy, that brother bastard, really, was he crazy?

“.....An S-Rank dungeon?”

“Yes. The other guild members followed inside, but they were all chased out. They said the mood was really scary. Still, they said it was a dungeon that suited them well, so even if they have a hard time, they would be unharmed...”

Even so, it was an S-Rank dungeon. Since an S-Rank Hunter was necessary, at minimum a mid to high grade. Going in there taking only Peace? And what sin had Peace committed? I mean, he wasn't a guy who would forcefully drag him along..... Even if it was a manageable place, an S-Rank dungeon attack time was long. If it was just the two of them, they wouldn't be able to rest properly.

Really... Yoohyun, this crazy bastard. If you're upset about something, say it through words, you brother bastard.

Chapter 80: < Demon King's Spinning Wheel (1) >

< Demon King's Spinning Wheel (1) >

If it were up to me, I wanted to run out immediately. But the discharge was pushed to tomorrow at the surrounding people's urging to rest just one more day just in case.

-Chirp cheep

The small beak grabbed a puzzle piece and walked over to put it in the right place. When the rabbit picture on the puzzle's right side was finished, Chirpie stared at its creation like it was moved. Of course, I was also impressed.

"Our Chirpie really must be a genius."

"Anybody can put together that picture puzzle. It's just 100 pieces."

Yerim, who was sitting in the chair next to the bed, said indifferently.

"What do you mean 'just'! Chirpie is still young, you know? The recommended age for this is 5 years old."

Chirpie really had a good head. ...Though it also did stupid things sometimes. Specifically, it went a little back and forth. Sometimes, it was calm and smart and wasn't obsessed with food, but also sometimes it didn't see the glass and smacked into it and made a fuss cheeping, asking for food.

'Could it be a split personality, no, a birdality[1]?'

Smart Chirpie and dum... glutton Chirpie.

It was something that was possible enough. Since there were monsters that had two or more heads, each with their own character. Even just speaking of the Lauchtas, it had three heads each using different curse and poison skills, so it was even more difficult.

‘There definitely were bird monsters that were normal as a baby and then had two heads when they grew, right?’

Truthfully it was ugl... no, our Chirpie would be cute even with two heads, but. Hm.

“Chirpie. You don’t have to grow. Would dad not be able provide for just one of you?”

-Chirp!

It was okay if it didn’t grow. Was there a reason for it to grow? At any rate, I didn’t know the growth conditions, and skills didn’t work, so let’s just live like this.

I petted Chirpie and then looked at the status window I had left on next to me. Specifically, it was the My Brat skill application window. (Han Yoohyun-S), (Peace-S). Neither of them had changes.

It meant that they were unharmed, but when I saw letters of Han Yoohyun on the name place, anger flared up inside me again.

“Han Yoohyun, son of bitch.”

“If Guild Leader is a son of a bitch, wouldn’t ahjussi who is his hyung... nevermind.”

Yerim fanned her hands as if telling me to calm down.

“I’ve said it several times, but there won’t be much trouble. He even took two gate stones, so if they really can’t put up with it, they’ll probably come back out.”

I knew that. I knew that but I still was mad. There was ‘choosing to suffer because you’re young’, but there was a limit. Fuck, no matter how amazing of an S-Rank Hunter he was, he was courting danger despite not being invincible? Tossing over the attack preparation all safely finished, and going crawling in, really.

“Han Yoohyun, this crazy bastard.”

“Ahjussi, take deep breathes. Deeply, heueub ha- heueub ha-.”

While thinking it wasn’t to that point, I swallowed and spit out long breaths. I felt a little better.

“Yerim, you’ve been getting calls since a while ago – you’re not going to pick them up?”

I asked, looking at the cell phone letting out light from where it was thrown on the table.

“It’s okay. It’s the Association.”

“Don’t you have to take it?”

“No. I’m the most easy to handle so they’re acting like that. This time, an A-Rank dungeon jumped up into a S-Rank. Of course the Association is in a fuss. But besides ahjussi who was carried out and Sunghan ahjussi who didn’t properly participate in the combat, the most easy to handle is me, so they’re acting annoying, trying to get me to tell them in detail. Irritatingly.”

Speaking of, the Association probably had a huge headache too. Dungeon ranks seesawing meant they they couldn’t guarantee Hunters’ safety.

“They haven’t made an announcement about it yet, right?”

“They seem like they want to sew shut the lips of the people who know? The opponents just happen to be S-Rank Hunters, so they can’t, but if they were mid to low rank Hunters, they might’ve buried them in a mountain.”

Would they go that far?

“That’s right, what did ahjussi get for the reward?”

Yerim asked, her eyes shining.

“I got the SS-Rank Mermaid Queen of Sea Waves Earrings. Here, this.”

The elegant blue gem earrings that were hanging from her ears shook, following the movement of her head.

To think it was an SS-Rank equipment; something good came out. If you caught a 1st Rank, an SS-Rank monster, there was a higher probability of SS-Rank items coming out, but it wasn’t a hundred percent. Instead of equipment, special or material consumable items could come out, too.

“There’s a skill for free activity in water added to the Mana and Mental stats. And in water, it increases water-related and ice-related skill effects by 30%!”

“That’s impressive! There shouldn’t be a Hunter who could follow you in water?”

“Right? Dungeons where you have to do underwater combat are on the unpopular side, but I’m going to sweep up all of them. I’ll quickly pay back my debt!”

She smiled, extremely pleased. If it was an ice skill effect 30% increase in water, she had to quickly raise her ice resistance rank. If you added the buff and reinforcement, I thought it had to be S-Rank to handle it.

I told Yerim the precautions and then asked.

“Have you heard what the other people got?”

“Of course, they didn’t tell me easily. Hyuna unni seemed like her mouth would rip from smiling, so something good definitely came out. I don’t know at all for the Seseong Guild Leader, and our Guild Leader was also already angry, so I don’t know. Sunghan ahjussi got a gate stone. He was happy, saying a good thing came out even though he didn’t do anything. Peace probably didn’t get anything?”

“Probably?”

I didn’t really know. Since he had skills, the system probably applied to him, but it seemed like he didn’t have an inventory.

“Ahjussi should quickly check too!”

With the urging, I opened the inventory list. I hadn't organized it in a long time and just carelessly put things in, so the list was messy. The inventory also had a limit, so I had to organize it.

When I went straight down the list, an unfamiliar item's name stood out.

[Nameless Demon King's Old Spinning Wheel]

What was this? First of all, since it said 'Demon King', it seemed to be a high rank item. I took out the item from the inventory.

".....What is that?"

"It seems like a part of a spinning wheel's... wheel that spins thread."

It was a real spinning wheel. It was smaller than a person's head, and was an old wheel made of normal wood.

"The explanation window... A spinning wheel's wheel that some demon king used a long time ago, SS-Rank. Besides that, there's nothing else written."

“Even as a demon king, it seems like they had a peaceful hobby.”

Right. But how did you use this? Was it a material? To make a spinning wheel? If you make a spinning wheel with this, could you spin gold thread from hay with it – what, was it something like that?

‘I should’ve received the attack rewards doubled effect, so why didn’t something good come out? Was it because my contribution level was too low?’

Since it looked like it was just the one spinning wheel, it seemed like the doubled effect didn’t necessarily mean that two items came out. It looked like it was applied to an S-Rank item that should’ve come out, so that it came out as an SS-Rank.

I decided to show it to Myeongwoo later and put it back into my inventory.

Myeongwoo had gone into the Forge like always, and Kim Sunghan had returned to Haeyeon Guild. That guild leader guy had abruptly run into a dungeon, basically by himself, so Haeyeon should also be quite unsettled... shit, deep breaths, deep breaths.

Just then, Yerim’s expression hardened stiffly. She looked toward the door and frowned.

“A crazy guy came.”

Yoo Hyun wouldn't have come out already. Shortly, I heard a knock. Before permission was given, the door opened, and Sung Hyunjae came in.

He sent an outwardly at least warm gaze toward Yerim.

"Your senses are good."

"How long has it been that I would already forget it?"

Yerim stood from her seat and lightly bowed her head. It was a polite appearance, but... it seemed like she had said 'crazy guy' even knowing that Sung Hyunjae would hear. Yerim, let's be careful with our words a little..... did she get it from Moon Hyuna?

"Are you alright?"

"Yes, I am fine. Thank you for coming all the way here."

It wasn't a welcoming face, but first of all, I smiled. What could I do? That Sung Hyunjae's expression at least was quite warm and friendly. Though it was that face when he rejected my skill.

“I heard about Han Yoohyun. They say sweet things are good when you are stressed.”

And then he held out the shopping bag he brought in. Was it something to eat? Yerim took it instead and put it on the table.

“Did you say the standby time for sharing the same skill was 15 days?”

As soon as the short greetings ended, the skill sharing came up. Since he directly experienced the doubled attack skill effect, it made sense, but it wasn't something that was easy to use. I apologize but even if you express interest, there is no use.

“Yes. The utility is not very high. There are not many skills that can be shared, and though the doubled attack skill effect is good, as you know, I have a weak body. Unless there is a special item like the bracelet last time, it is difficult to use in proximity combat. And for dungeons, up to S-Rank is impossible.”

Last time, there was the goal of Kim Sunghan's growth. But without that kind of reason, there was no reason to do something inefficient like taking a crowd of S-Rank Hunters to attack a dungeon.

Thus, there was no need to use it outside of a dungeon break after this.

“That's true.”

Sung Hyunjae nodded his head, as if he was agreeing. But still, the mood was a little icky.

“But it’s an item that was made once, so couldn’t there be a second time? Or a dungeon item with a similar effect could come out. I’m looking forward to that.”

The person involved wasn’t even thinking of it, but he was counting his chickens before they hatched[2]. The eyes bending, pleased, were awful so a sharp voice unconsciously burst out.

“Though it seems like there is no need for the Seseong Guild Leader to look forward to it. It is not like there are no S-Rank Hunters around me. There is even one right next to me.”

There was Yoohyun, and Yerim. There were two kids full of attack skills at home, so why would I use it on a neighboring ahjussi?

At my words, Yerim, who had a stiff face, grinned. On the other hand, Sung Hyunjae openly showed a sad expression. I mean, who was he to be sad? Though it should be a fake expression anyways.

“That’s sad. I had thought that we’ve gotten quite close.”

His saying nonsense with a normal face really was peerless. Where did he go to sell his conscience?

“...Wasn’t there not any reason to become close? What did we do that we would become close?”

“There were a lot of things involved in their own way.”

“Please separate public from private.”

“Aren’t there also things you received from the start?”

I wondered if I should take off the earrings and throw them but I held back. Even if I did, it would only be my loss, and I should use well things that I received. Instead I smiled.

“Thanks to being lucky in friends, something like an S-Rank item is not satisfying, now. Still, if it is something like the SS-Rank Fire Dragon Sillekia’s Wings, then even the words ‘I love you’ could probably come out, Sung Hyunjae-ssi. After trying on that coat, it seems quite good.”

“So it’s an expensive love.”

“Is it so – rather, it is a bargain. Should I also give you a sample? I love you, Sung Hyunjae-ssi.”

It was a keyword that could even grow stat A-Ranks into S-Ranks. It was seriously cheap.

There, now what were you going to do? It wasn't like he could really give it to me. When I looked up at him, grinning, he shrugged his shoulders.

"That is true. It's not that expensive. If it doesn't just end at words."

...No, wait. Fuck, don't take the coat out of your inventory!

"Of course it was a joke!"

"That is right, it was a joke!"

Yerim quickly cut in. Then, she glared at Sung Hyunjae as much as she could.

"The patient should be feeling tired, so please go back, Seseong Guild Leader."

Sung Hyunjae looked at us and smiled, like it was funny, and along with telling me to recuperate well, he obediently left.

Shit, I should quit applying the keyword to that person. Giving the Sillekia's Wings should've been empty words, but still, it wasn't good for my mental health. At any rate, it didn't seem like there would be the keyword effect.

"Ahjussi! You can't be taken in by a mere item!"

Yerim shouted shrilly as soon as the door shut. And then why were you taking off your earrings? Your words and actions were different, Yerim.

"I have SS-Rank equipment, too!"

Holding out the earrings, her face, the two cheeks were very sullen[3]. Her mouth was about to rip from smiling over getting a good item, but she was giving it to me? I felt like I was going to die from the cuteness.

"Even if you don't give me things like that, I like you a hundred times more than that ahjussi."

"Really?"

"Of course!"

There was no comparison. At the reply filled with sincerity, she smiled brightly. Of course,

she didn't forget to sneakily put the earrings back on her ears. As expected of our Yerim.

Sung Hyunjae, who had gone down to the hospital parking lot and gotten into his car, took out his cell phone. After a short dial tone, the other person picked up the phone.

[Wow, mister[4]. What is the matter?]

It was a woman's energetic voice. Sung Hyunjae didn't give a long explanation and went straight to business.

"Prepare to come back to Korea."

[Already? It is faster than I expected.]

"Contact Noah, too. Convey the message to enter the country as the Ark[5] Guild Leader, who's not affiliated to Seseong."

[Huh? That guy too? That is a little weird – weren't you going to pass Korea to Haeyeon and come out?]

“The plan changed.”

The voice over the cell phone was full of doubt.

[I thought you thought of the Haeyeon Guild Leader as cute; did he do something irritating?]

“No, the young master is still cute. Lately, he’s gotten very venomous, so he’s become even cuter. But the one that made him venomous is a slight problem.”

The cool gaze went toward outside the car window. The call ended. Sung Hyunjae lowered the cell phone, and remembered the events of 3 years ago.

The self-styled filial duty addicts, who came in touch right when he had Awakened.

‘Filial duty, it’s not even funny.’

It was a title that seemed joking, but the information that those people conveyed was accurate.

So there was no choice but to change the plans.

It was incredibly late at night. Chirpie had taken up one pillow and was sleeping. Yerim had gone back to the dorms, too. Myeongwoo said he would stay, but was sent back and only Kim Sunghan was remaining in the guardian room.

By habit, I checked that damned guy's name on the status window, and pressed the TV remote. There wasn't really anything to watch. They were still yapping on about Myeongwoo on the Hunter related programs.

It was just then

"Boss Mr. Kim, you've woken up!"

It was the Dokkaebi. The brightly smiling mask was incredibly pleased, so I smiled back.

It was around the time the keyword could be applied to this guy, too.

[1] the word for personality used here (인격) has the word/hanja for human 인(人) in it, so yj just made a new word here with the hanja for bird 조(鳥)

[2] from the saying 'the person who will give the rice cake hasn't even dreamed of it yet, but [you] are already drinking kimchi soup' which means 'the person who is going to do

something for you hasn't even thought of it yet, but you're already expecting it to happen', or similar to the eng 'counting your chickens before they hatch'

[3] lit. 'swollen' but it means that she's angry and sulky

[4] eng transliterated to krn

[5] maybe it's 'arc', who knows, I just took a gamble w what seemed most likely